

INSIDE SOCCER

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Australia's Fortnightly Soccer Publication

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INSIDE
football's
NUMBER ONE
paper

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in quit threat

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much more

Sydney Soccer Shocker

AN
Inside Soccer
EXCLUSIVE
by
Bruce Campbell

Top clubs threaten to quit big league

TWO OF Australian football's biggest clubs have admitted the possibility of pulling out of the national league, claiming that "enough is enough". "We have had to endure so much in recent years," said an official of Sydney United.

"Our club has changed its name, built a three million dollar grandstand, installed new floodlighting and everything else that the ASF has asked us - but there is a limit to how far we can go in a short space of time.

"There is a section of our support which is not happy with some of the changes being forced upon us.

"Maybe it is time for Sydney United call a halt to it all before we end up back in State League - and believe me there are LOT of people at this club who think that would be the best thing for us."

Marconi-Fairfield are also similarly concerned at the direction of the game off the field and are reeling after a series of stinging attacks on the club because of its so-called "ethnic" name.

"Marconi is a respected name in Australian soccer," says club soccer secretary Frank Labbozzetta.

"We don't consider ourselves to be ethnic, and neither do our supporters nor players.

"The support which we give the Southern



Districts Association is huge and there are thousands of kids out there who just want to play for Marconi.

"The facilities at this club are also the best in the country - so why all this sudden fuss about our name?"

The possibilities of playing State League

soccer have been openly discussed by board members at both clubs, something which would leave the credibility of the Ericsson Cup reeling if it were to happen.

There were fears during the off-season that the dumping of Melbourne clubs the Zebras and Heidelberg

have led to a united Victorian Super Summer League with Preston and other ambitious clubs and now there appears to be a possibility that it could happen in the premier state.

Ironically Marconi Tony Labbozzetta, who has been the subject of a

recent attack by the ASF is one of the founders of the national soccer league concept and over the years has filled many important roles within the sport, both at club and national level, while Sydney United are regarded as one of the league's most progressive clubs.

You're Nicked Aussie coach takes paper to court

FORMER Australian Institute of Sport Head Coach Ron Smith has commenced legal proceedings against the Australian newspaper for alleged defamation in an article on the recent Senate Inquiry into player transfers.

"I have taken legal advice about the story," said Smith, "and the indications from my lawyer are that I have a very, very strong case."

"In fact, I don't believe that the Australian has a leg to stand on legally."

The report mentions excerpts from the recent Senate inquiry in which Ron Smith and Tom Sermanni, the former Assistant Coach at the AIS, gave evidence on matters relating to the transfer of Australian players abroad.

Smith says that the report was factually incorrect and quoted references from the Senate Report which were also not factual, and feels that, as a result, his professional reputation has been defamed.

"The newspaper article was also printed in a soccer paper," Smith added, "and I have yet to make a decision what action to take there."

It is understood that should Smith's legal action be successful then he will be liable to defamation damages possibly in excess of \$100,000.

Ron Smith recently left his position at the Australian Institute of Sport to take up a mega-bucks contract in Sabah, Malaysia.

It is understood that he was an odds-on certainty to land the plum ASF High Performance Manager's job but withdrew when his name headed a short list.

Smith has a reputation as one of the best tactical thinkers in the Australian game and has enjoyed a long and successful career at the Institute, starting in 1982 when he was assistant to the first Head Coach, Jimmy Shoulder.

During that time he has coached hundreds of the cream of Australian soccer's best young players, many of whom have since gone on to become big name stars in Australia and Europe.

John White

Inside Soccer

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Stick

FIFA official in amazing quit threat

by
Bruce Campbell

TOP RATED
F I F A
linesman
Gordon

Dunster has threatened to quit the game - despite being rated amongst the game's top world-wide officials.

Dunster was one of the stars of USA '94 and

officiated as a linesman at the tournament's opening ceremony.

But despite his high international profile his domestic career seems to have hit the skids, with his few refereeing opportunities now restricted to knock about games and friendlies.

"I'm fed up with it all," says a shattered Dunster.

"I'm on the FIFA

Linesmen List but seemingly can't get an Ericsson Cup match to referee.

"The whole situation is very frustrating and I have seriously thought about quitting the game."

"My involvement at USA '94 was amongst my highlights but I've also officiated at the Barcelona Olympics as well as top NSL fixtures.

"Somewhere along the line the system stops me from also being involved as a NSL referee, and that is just so frustrating."

Dunster is one of the new breed of top young officials which has been spurred on by FIFA's youth policy, a policy which has seen some of the world's top whistlers retire in the last few seasons because of FIFA

policy.

"Gordon isn't the only one in this position," adds ASF National Referees Director, Gary Power.

"There are a number of other officials in the same position and it is unfortunate."

"FIFA have got a policy of wanting top referees to referee and top linesmen to run the lines."

"It is the decision to promote specialist linesmen which is causing the problem."

"The only way that you can have a specialist linesman is if he gets more experience running the line, and the only way to do that is for them to give up doing the 'centre'."

"It is a decision that they themselves are being forced to make because of the new directions from FIFA."

But it is an amazing back-flip from the system of just a few seasons ago when the path to becoming a top referee included gaining experience running the line also.

The new FIFA linesmen were hailed as the new young generation of future top referees, with a lot of controversy created by the early 'retirement' of some of the best men in the business.

Since then FIFA has totally changed its policy making it very difficult to pursue a career in the middle.

Australia's players are also critical of the system.



It's just a storm in a tea cup

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS coach John Kosmina has labelled the fracas between his side and Melbourne Knights in a Round 17 Ericsson Cup match as nothing more than "a storm in a tea cup".

Speaking on radio shortly after the game the articulate and forthright Kosmina slammed the press for blowing the whole thing out of proportion. "I didn't see the whole incident," he said, "but in every game there is a bit of hard play."

"I don't see anything wrong with that and think that it has been totally blown out of context. It isn't anything more than a storm in a tea cup."

Kosmina's remarks came just before the ASF handed out whopping fines and suspended fines of nearly thirty thousand dollars to Sydney United and Marconi-Fairfield after an ugly incident at Marconi Stadium late last season.

The ASF is trying to stamp out violent conduct on and off the park and that resolution resulted in Sydney United coach Branko Culina being whacked \$5,000 - the biggest single person fine in Australian soccer history.

Already this season Sydney United's brilliant youngster Sean Babic was suspended for four matches after an alleged elbowing incident saw UTS Olympic player Nick Orlic requiring treatment for a facial injury.

your line

Referees are coming under increasing pressure from the media as the demand for professionalism increases – and Gordon Dunster finds himself involved in an unusual controversy as the man in the middle

Gordon Dunster has had his share of headlines in the past but now the talented whistler is threatening to quit over hurdles placed in his career path.

One leading NSL striker asks: "Do we have that many really good referees in the game that we can afford to keep men like Gordon Dunster out?"

panel as a referee.

"If I drop out of lines just now then there is no guarantee that I will make it as a FIFA referee in time for France, or at all.

"It seems a bit hard that I am being forced

to afford to lose any more of its best officials with the retirement in the last couple of years of the top echelon leaving National Director Gary Power with some problems in filling the spots adequately.

This year Wayne Dade has been hailed as an extremely talented newcomer – just as Dunster was

some years ago.

But if Dade sees the path to FIFA success through the line then Power would be back to square one.

Currently the top ranked ASF referee is West Australian-based Eddie Lennie but his flights from Perth are placing a big strain on the resources of the Ericsson Cup this

season.

It could be that Lennie, who has come through the ranks of the Scottish Premier League, would be mainly used for debutants Perth Glory home games next season, something which would push Power into an even harder corner.

"I'm so fed up with it all that I might just quit"

allow Dunster to reach the top as a referee and a linesman also."

In the meantime Gordon Dunster is clearly caught in the middle.

"Realistically, my best chance to be at France '98 is on the line," he says.

"But to do that I would have to drop any claims to referee, and I don't know if I want to do that.

"And after France '98 I would be too old to make it onto the FIFA

to make a kind of decision like this.

"But the way I feel I could just as well chuck the whole thing."

Dunster has already seen time in the centre – running NSL games for the last four seasons before the World governing body took its amazing change of direction.

Since then he has concentrated on line duties but is now clearly frustrated at this block to his career path. Clearly the ASF can't

Inside Soccer brings you all the big stories – told by the biggest names in the business



PHOTOGRAPH: Andrew Dawson



City star joins in skipper arm band race

ADELAIDE CITY'S outstanding Soccerroo defender Alex Tobin has joined the list of internationals ready to take over the Aussie skipper's spot, something which is certain to re-fuel the debate caused when Feyenoord's Aurelio Vidmar launched a media blitz on Paul Wade's captaincy.

"I haven't been asked by Eddie Thomson whether I'd do the job or not," says Tobin.

"But I would. I've been around the national team set-up for a while now and feel that, if asked, could certainly do the job. It would be a great honour to captain Australia."

Tobin, one of the longest serving one-club men in the game, has fifty one Aussie caps to his credit and is seen by many in the media as the player to replace Wade – should Thomson decide that it is time for the Canberra Cosmos star to call it quits.

Another player singled out by the media is Sydney United's young centre back Tony Popovic but with the likelihood of Popovic heading overseas sooner rather than later he is likely to be out of the immediate running.

But Wade has no intention of calling it quits yet and clearly sees the possibility of hanging onto his captaincy until the next World Cup. The reality is that Eddie Thomson may feel that a quick decision is not necessary anyway with the early stage qualifiers still some eight long months off.

That is in Wade's favour but when that time comes Thomson will have to stick his neck out and select the man who is to guide the Soccerroos to an historic second time World Cup finals spot.

AUSTRALIA CUP YOUTH TOURNAMENT

ISO wishes to announce preliminary details of its forthcoming international youth tournament which will take place in Sydney during the 1996 July school holidays.

ENQUIRIES:
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21 Einstein Street,
Winston Hills, NSW

HERE WE GO!

Good news this week for Australian soccer's reading-starved fans was the launch of *Inside Soccer* which was officially unveiled at a celebrity packed function at the Bankstown Rydges Hotel.

"I only want to be associated with quality – and knowing who is behind the paper I feel very confident," said Australian soccer legend Adrian Alston.

The former World Cup striker is just one of a team of high profile writers, photographers and experts signed on with the new tabloid paper.

"I promise readers that *Inside Soccer* will be independent and very racy," said Managing Director, Cec Bucello.

"At long last we have a genuine tabloid – but we won't dig into smut for our stories.

"Instead they will be well balanced, investigative and a damn good read. Our headlines will be provocative and our style will be punchy – all up a very racy paper and just what the game needs."

Inside Soccer is designed and typeset by Duntroon Publishing which also produces the highly acclaimed series of Ericsson Cup match day magazines. It is also unique in that it has been launched in conjunction with a series of soccer radio programmes from the same stable.

Football DIARY

with
Bruce Campbell



SOME PEOPLE (see *In Off The Post*) think that I am an ASF and David Hill basher, but they are wrong. In fact, I'm not really a 'basher' of any kind and, instead, I only make a plea for some kind of consistency for our beloved game.

Sometimes, the ASF do some really wonderful and marvellous things like the thirty three round National Soccer League which was certainly the most wonderful in recent years.

And for the record, I've only actually met David Hill once and found him to be a very articulate and personable man. I do wish him all of the best, however, in his efforts to drag this game kicking and screaming into the twenty first century but I think he needs to get it into the nineteen-nineties first - and there a little consistency may come in handy.

Consistency is good in life and it is great in sport, it is the sort of thing that routine is made from and allows the gradual changes which ultimately bring success. But it doesn't seem to happen in our game, a sport where it seems that those in power wish to make sweeping changes every single season.

I can't remember a single NSL season which hasn't had some dramatic change in policy and you have to really go back to the days of the pre-1977 New South Wales Federation to find consistency. Little wonder then that that co-incided with the most successful ever era for soccer in Australia.

However, the guys at the ASF are pygmies when it comes to making real changes. For the Grand Master of Changes we have to take a trip to Zurich where Herr J Sepp Blatter holds office.

OK, before I get started let me admit that the current trends of FIFA appeal me - there, I've confessed.

Back passes to keepers, professional fouls and the like, they are all small fry changes compared to Blatter's latest brain storm - increasing the size of the goals.

Herr Blatter wants to see more goals because the crowds will flock to games. His argument is that if you make it more difficult for a keeper to save then you will make it easier for a striker to score. Sounds nice in theory, but will it really work?

I have some revolutionary wisdom for Kaiser Sepp - it isn't just keepers who save goals, it is defenders also. How many goals do you see which are scored in front of the last line of defence?

Instead, the more traditional method of scoring is to cut in behind the defence where a striker at least has a one-on-one, and sometimes more, numerical ratio with the keeper.

It is this global tightening up of defences that has reduced the goals scored as much as the goalkeepers' astute study of angles.

I've said this countless times before; that the game has been coached to death. It is much easier to stifle good play than it is to create it and for this reason the majority of coaches, unless of course you are Brazilian, concentrate on defence first, defence last, and defence in between.

Strikers, if they are any good at all, will command the highest wages and fees because they are the rarest. Keepers come a long way down the big money scale. And even in the days when a bounce on the back of the score from a wet ball would relieve you of your senses for ten minutes there weren't really that many more goals scored.

Watch any old clip on TV or video and you'll be appalled at how easy some of the goals in the big finals were put away. Do we need bigger goals? I can't see how it will make one blind bit of difference.

All that will happen is that defences will work out new strategies on how to be tighter than an Aberdonian banker, keepers will study angles even more acutely and strikers? well, I suspect that they will still blaze the occasional ball over the bar from as far out as the six yard line, still blast a ball past a now wider and taller empty net - and still command the biggest wages in footballing Christendom.

We might also just end up with seven foot six goalkeepers. Hopefully in the meantime the Smurfs of Zurich will keep their tampering to a minimum and let us all get on with the game we have loved most for over a century.

John White's IN OFF

Watching the Blues

As a South Melbourne supporter for many years I have seen some great players come and go.

Over ten years ago I had the privilege to watch South Melbourne's 1984 Championship side play some super games.

The team then was the Australian Liverpool of the '80s. Players such as Crino, Brown, Egan, Davidson, Russell etc. were my favourite idols.

Over the years I have been asking for any copies of matches from 1984 on video but no-one seems to have copies.

I have three matches from 1984 on video; South Melbourne v Green Gully, South Melbourne v Heidelberg, and South Melbourne v Heidelberg in the semis.

There are plenty more that SBS did show which I haven't got. I would really appreciate any help that I can get in obtaining copies of that season.

Stelios Bekos
1 Hill Street
East Bentleigh, Victoria 3105

(A letter which doesn't have any suggestions on how to run the game - now that IS a rarity. How about it fellas, any of you ex players or officials who can help Stelios out? - John White)

A Radical Thought

I read in an issue of the Marconi Football magazine (which is also published by Duntroon Publishing) an editorial called "A Radical Thought for 1996". I really can't understand the 'cheap shot' at the ASF.

If the gripe is the ASF wants Marconi to change its name, then by all means use the editorial comment as a means of getting stuck into them. But instead of bating about the bush readers should be told of the reasons why Marconi SHOULD retain its name; tell the readers why it is that all of the other clubs have had to change their names but why Marconi and UTS Olympic should not be required to fall into line.

Personally, the name doesn't bother me. I have been visiting Marconi Stadium for some twenty years and will continue to do so while ever I believe I can watch a good game of football.

Perhaps you could support such an argument by producing evidence to show that Melbourne Knights, South Melbourne, Sydney United etc. have been adversely affected and have lost support as a result of their name changes.

What's in a name? But as I said before, if the name change is the gripe, then concentrate on this! However, my argument with the editorial is what I perceive to be an unwarranted criticism of the ASF.

Perhaps we all read different newspapers and watch different TV channels. I, for one, cannot recall previous occasions on which commercial channels not only gave scores but also showed replays of the goals scored.

Mike Cockerill, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald, certainly seems to be getting more column space than was previously the case.

The call is for a "sorting out of the Johnnie Walker Cup" when the draw for the competition appears in the same issue.

John White
Inside Soccer
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Queenbeyan
NSW 2620

LETTERS to John White are welcomed. However, they should be kept as brief as possible.

Inside Soccer reserves the right to alter, delete any letter which is published.

Any material which is to be returned should be accompanied by a self addressed and stamped envelope.

The call is also for "getting an international series in order", I thought plans are already in place for such games early in 1996.

Certainly, we would all like to see more of the above.

And, certainly, we would all love to see our team involved in challenge matches against overseas teams at club level.

But let's be fair.

David Hill and his team are expected to achieve in twelve months what the previous power brokers were unable to achieve in eighteen years of NSL competition.

And while it is also true that our game has received adverse publicity through two recent enquiries let us not lose sight of the fact that the allegations which led to these enquiries had nothing to do with anything which occurred under the current administration.

So rather than asking what the current ASF has done for our game, and rather than expecting the new administration to do in twelve months what earlier administrations could not do in eighteen years, perhaps it is timely to ask the clubs what they are doing to support the steps which David Hill and his team are trying to take.

It is noted in *Marconi Football*, and quite rightly, that "Marconi Fairfield is the biggest club north of Melbourne and arguably the biggest in Australasia."

Yet if you take away the 8,000+ crowd which attended the local derby v Sydney United the figures show that Marconi is averaging home crowds of less than 4,000.

I believe this is one of the lowest in the league - and this from a team near the top of the league table!

I read local papers issued in the lower Blue Mountains (30 minutes from Marconi Stadium) and Penrith (20 minutes from Marconi).

Publicity for the Marconi team never rates a mention. I have worked for the past eight years at a school near St Marys (15 minutes from Marconi) and, for the three years before that at a school a bare 5 minutes from Marconi.

In those eleven years I cannot recall a single approach from the Marconi Club for us to host a coaching session for students to be conducted by leading players.

Yet during those eleven years we have been visited by leading players from Sydney Kings, Sydney Swans, Penrith rugby league and Penrith cricket team - with the initial approach being made by the teams.

My guess would be that the populations of the Mt Druitt-Blacktown areas would be equally starved of publicity from the "biggest club north of Melbourne!"

I share the final editorial suggestion that "maybe another priority is to enjoy the football" - and, no, that's not too radical.

But to enjoy the football the team must play more of the sweeping 'defence into attack' game that they play so well, albeit all to infrequently in recent games.

To enjoy the football we need at least 5-6,000 at every home game to create more of an atmosphere.

The club also needs to do something to harness the crowd behind the northern goalposts to lead the chants and singing throughout the match - again to add to the atmosphere.

If changing the name of the team will help the club to achieve talk of this, then so be it.

However, I do not believe this is the answer - and, thus, not a priority.

John Harvey
Blaxland

(Ask not what you club can do for you John, but what you can do for your club. I like the JFK speeches too.)

And you have kept schtum all of these years! Presumably you also go to Marconi because you like the football, enjoy the fabulous club facilities - and get a 32 page gloss magazine, which is the rave of the league, for nothing.

If WE had to wait for people to bring us material then we wouldn't be in business. Get off your backside, pick up the phone and tell Marconi your problems and suggestions - but don't wait another eleven years.

Nobody is bagging David Hill. But he has come in with some pretty big statements, statements which, so far, haven't really materialised. You give him time if you like, we'd prefer to goad the ASF into action, and I think you do David Hill an injustice thinking that he wants a sycophantic press.

I also have some shattering news for you - you only get atmosphere at a game when there are TWO sets of fans, you know, home and away. But the ASF has robbed Sydney and Melbourne fans of some of their traditional derbies with the club sackings pre-season.

Marconi are not one of those clubs where Anglos feel intimidated. Instead it is one of the real progressive clubs of the post war era, a truly multi cultural club.

Why not defend them with the fervour that you reserve for Paddington. Me - I'm fed up to the back teeth of all this 'change the ethnic game'. Yes, let's get rid of the bigots who won't allow other cultures or make them feel unwelcome - and that includes all of the Anglos in this country who are disguising the current trend with another case of good old wog bashing.

Here is some earth shattering news for you. The game in Australia is part time at very best, yet I know of overseas professional clubs who would struggle to cope with what you want.

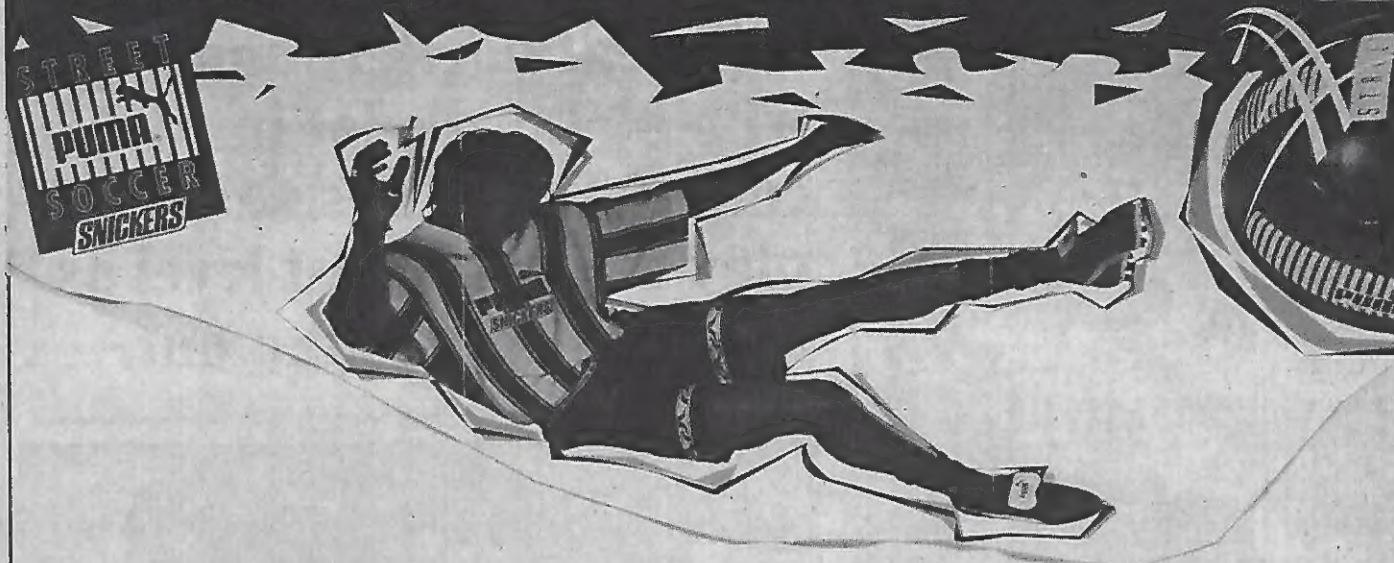
The majority of clubs anywhere struggle just to get eleven fit players on the park to keep people like you happy - although obviously not all of the time.

Singing fans, give me a break....

Some of your other points are a joke and we've probably spent too much space on them already. But Marconi, should be allowed to keep their name for the very best reason - because it is theirs. It is their tradition and tradition is important.

Why don't we change YOUR name to Cynthia just to keep the guys up the road happy - or is that too radical. - John White).

PUMA STREET SOCCER PRESENTED BY SNICKERS



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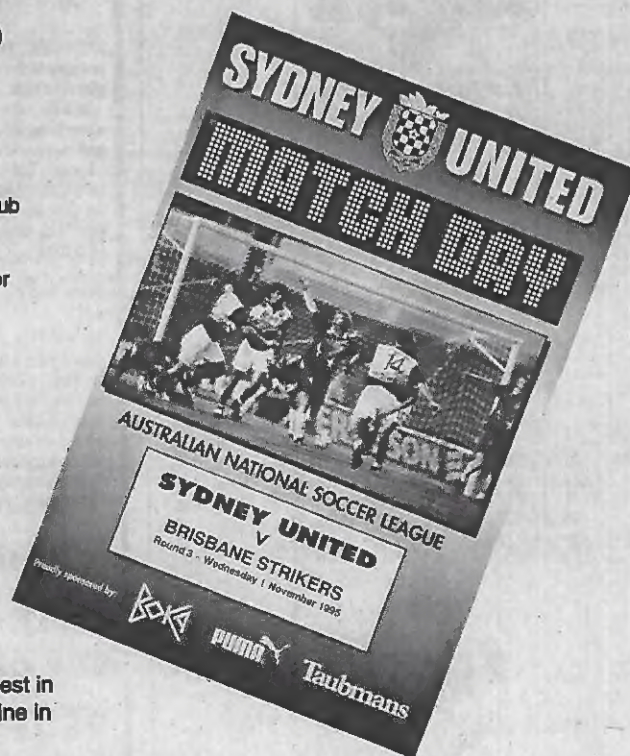
South Melbourne's In Blue & White

Marconi-Fairfield's Marconi Football

Kookaburra Rugby

and that's just in a year!

FIND OUT WHY *STUDS UP* rates Marconi Football as "easily the best in the A League" or why SBS named *Match Day* "the best club magazine in Australia."



ENQUIRIES: Bruce Campbell (06) 299 2232



Three Olyroos from different backgrounds who all have a lot in common; the desire to play at the highest level as *Inside Soccer* found out.



Kevin Muscat: appetite for full time football

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RUNNING OUT onto the field to play for your country is the glamour part; but the not so glamour side is the training camp slogs.

But they are a necessary part of the process and something which Australian players have now grown up with.

Danny Tiatto, Joe Spiteri and Kevin Muscat are no different and before they landed their parts on the Olyroo stage at Hindmarsh last month they had to go through the sometimes boring routine of camps.

Inside Soccer: "Are training camps really that bad?"

Joe Spiteri:

"I enjoy the training part but once that it is over there isn't much to do except for coming to eat - and ordering pizzas It can be boring."

Kevin Muscat

"There are times when it is boring but I like getting together with my mates from other interstate teams. But you do get bored and you tend to sleep a lot."

"No one would leave Australia for any other reason - we've travelled and appreciate what we have"

Inside Soccer: "Kevin, you've been part of the camp scene for about five years now, has the novelty worn off at all?"

Kevin Muscat: "You are always preparing for different things so that is the part that keeps you interested and players are always fighting for positions."

Danny Tiatto: "It's really good coming into camp with all the boys and training together."

Inside Soccer: "Are there any big differences between training for the Olyroos and training for your clubs?"

Joe Spiteri: "Olyroo training is very professional and everything that you do is done on a very strict basis, everyone is ready to go and the intensity is much higher."

Kevin Muscat: "At an international level you really have to look out for Number One first. But if everyone around you does exactly the same and has a good game then you are all on par."

Danny Tiatto: "When I first came into a national training camp for the first time it was exactly what I expected. There is a hard line and no mucking about. If you don't obey that then you are straight out. I expected that so I was ready for it."

Inside Soccer: "International camps overseas are notorious for player discussions about wages and who is going where. Are Aussie camps any different?"

Kevin Muscat: "You have your own friends with whom you discuss certain things but I don't think that the lads get into much detail about wages and things like that. Little things that can help each other, though - of course."

Joe Spiteri: "We discuss little things, but nothing really heavy."

Inside Soccer: "Any real characters in this Olyroo squad?"

..... bursts of laughter
Kevin Muscat: "You have to be on your toes

The Three Amigos



Pensive: Joe Spiteri, Olyroo star

when you walk in here!

Danny Tiatto: "You get the piss taken out of you or you do it yourself - it just comes and goes."

Kevin Muscat: "On tour we have the 'nightmare' shirt award. We have to watch it when we get back to Australia because some of the comments written on the shirt aren't very nice!

We've all had our share of the 'shirt' - but I'll tell you a story about Joe ... on our European tour we had a tally on the last day to see who had the most shirts and Joe and Sash Dimoski were both drawn and who ever won it on the last day had the pleasure of keeping it, and it hadn't been washed in the whole time - so Joe got it to frame ..."

Inside Soccer: "Do the guys pick up on things written in the press and take the mickey out of



Committed: Danny Tiatto

each other?"

Joe Spiteri: "The press dubbed me 'spitfire' when I was at Parramatta and that has stuck with the boys."

Danny Tiatto: "Things come and go and stick for a while but then something new comes along. I haven't really picked up a nickname yet"

interrupted by Joe Spiteri: "Danny gets new ones every now and again like 'flea' and things like that."

Inside Soccer: "And what about overseas football, do all share the same ambition to hit the big time in Europe?"

Kevin Muscat: "Everyone has ambitions to play at the highest level so it is only natural to think about playing in Europe?"

Joe Spiteri: "It would have to be a really enticing offer, financially, to play in Asia where the standard of play isn't so high."

Kevin Muscat: "I don't think that you'll ever make it if you don't think to yourself that you'd like to be like Craig Moore or Ned Zelic or Aurelio Vidmar or whoever but there isn't any jealousy about the players in the squad who have overseas contracts. Craig Moore has done a lot but he is a real good kid as well."

Joe Spiteri: "When we went to Ibrox and saw the Glasgow Rangers set up you just thought, jeez I wish we could get a chance like that."

Kevin Muscat: "If there was anything like Ibrox in Australia I think all of the boys would be happy to stay here."

Joe Spiteri: "It would be nice to be pampered like that and have those kind of facilities and money."

Inside Soccer: "If there was one thing in the Australian game which you could get rid off overnight, what would it be?"

Danny Tiatto: "I'd say the ethnic side of the game really, it should be really cut out of the sport. I'm of Italian background but born in Australia but my folks share my thoughts. My dad wouldn't care where I played - as long as I got him a ticket! I don't think that the players really care who they play for. The ethnic thing is mainly something with the older generation."

Joe Spiteri: "There is no reason why anyone should stop coming to a game but it would be nice to see the clubs' supporter base broadened. It is just so hard for anyone from an Australian or other ethnic background to come along and watch the NSL."

Kevin Muscat: "I don't so much see it as things that you have to throw away but rather as things that have got to come into the game."

First of all players should be paid at least on a semi professional wage standard. You'd be surprised as just how many hours the players put in to the game."

You go to a game on the weekend and the supporters don't realise that you have worked all week from nine to five, you haven't seen your wife or kids, you go straight to training and get home at nine thirty when the kids are asleep - and you do that four or five times a week and then play on the weekend. There isn't much energy level for that sort of stuff - it does get to you."

Danny Tiatto: "Sometimes with the Melbourne Knights you could be training six times a week."

Kevin Muscat: "We can never compete with any of the full time countries overseas but at this stage we are only playing soccer for eight months of the year - what are you supposed to do for the other four months?"

Most of the Olympic team players have sacrificed lucrative jobs so that they can train full time but what do you do when you get to twenty four and then look at how much money you could have saved?"

It is a sacrifice but you do hope to get rewarded at some time."

Inside Soccer: "If a mediocre club in Belgium or Holland which only averages about four thousand to a game came in with a full time contract for you three tomorrow what would you reaction be?"

Kevin Muscat: "You'd have to way things up. You would be in the window but I don't think that anyone would leave Australia for other reasons. We've travelled all over the world and you tend to appreciate what you have got."

Joe Spiteri: "Without an agent it makes it a lot harder for yourself. You'd have to do all of the work in contacting the club and when you are so committed to training and playing it is hard to find time to do that sort of thing."

Danny Tiatto: "It is so hard because we are just so far away from Europe. It is hard just to get a foot in the door."



Goran Lozanouski has made the huge jump up to Socceroo stardom with all the grace of a ballet dancer. His crosses from the left wing are something to behold, and his defensive work rate is phenomenal. The Adelaide City player, who was controversially omitted from Australia's 1993 World Youth Cup final squad, is now very much a part of Eddie Thomson's international plans.

Thomson's Tartan Invasion

A USTRALIA is set to play Scotland in a friendly which will bring back memories of the last time the two countries clashed in 1986 - when a place in the World Cup finals was at stake.

"It's a great fixture," says national boss Eddie Thomson, himself a Scot, "and it shows you just how hard we have been working to lift the national team's profile."

When *Inside Soccer* spoke to Eddie he wasn't planning to take any of the Ericsson Cup-based players over to the big game which will be played on March 27, and instead was planning an invasion of Scotland with his Euro players.

"People have asked me if I'll have a conflict of loyalties with the game," says Thomson, "but I can assure you there is only one team who I'll be cheering for!" Thomson has left that question unanswered and the smile on his face suggests that only he and his wife know the truth.

But regardless of any loyalties that Thomson feels for the land of his birth he'll have a galaxy of stars to put on parade and this game is as vital to his World Cup preparations as it is for Scotland's European Championship build up.

"This isn't a meaningless friendly for us," said Scotland boss Craig Brown. "We've got a date with England in the European Championship in June and friendlies like this are an important part of our build up. Forget anything that has happened in the past, this is a serious game for us as well as Australia."

For the record the two countries have clashed five times to date with Australia yet to register a win and their best outing being that 0-0 draw in Melbourne in 1987 when Scotland went on to the World Cup finals.

The only survivor from either side that day likely to figure in the forthcoming fixture is Scottish keeper Jim Leighton who is vying for the number one shirt with Andy Goram, even at 37 years of age. However, Thomson was on the bench that night as assistant coach to Frank Arok and the line up was: Greedy, Yankos, Davidson, Ratcliffe, Dunn (Farina), Jennings, Patikas, Crino (Odzakov), Murphy, Mitchell, Kosmina.

I'm not ready yet **Cosmos star set to play waiting game**



ONE CANBERRA Cosmos player who has attracted strong interest from Sydney clubs is Michael Musitano who had been on the shopping list of Sydney United. Musitano was at United for pre-season trials and the club must be kicking themselves that they let him through the noose.

"Michael is a very talented player," United president Ivan Simic said, "but we couldn't offer enough for him to leave Canberra. He has a good job and although our player payment was much better than he is getting it probably wouldn't have topped his combined income. Maybe we should have upped our bid because he is certainly on fire."

Musitano certainly wasn't all that worried about not being picked up by the west Sydney high-flyers, especially with the Cosmos embarking on their debut season.

"I have to laugh when I read in the press that United coach Branko Culina rated me too slow," he said. "United wanted to sign me but I decided to stay in Canberra. I'm pretty happy here since I moved up from the Riverina and this town has a good reputation for players from my home region making it. Look at Walter Valeri."

And you could also be forgiven for thinking that he was upset not to be in Adelaide playing for the Olyroos. It is hard to understand how Eddie Thomson could have overlooked Musitano as he is one of the big stars of the NSL this season and outright favourite for Rookie of the Year.

"Being overlooked didn't worry me too much," he said. "I'm not really looking for anything like that just now and it is important not just to think about playing for Australia. I'm happy to be playing for the Cosmos and right now that is really all I am worried about."

Musitano's attitude is encouraging, especially with all the praise that is being heaped upon him this year. In some sections of the Canberra media he is being labelled a future Soccerroo but the only way that Thomson can assess him properly is by bringing him into training camps or squad selection. He should have done just that when the Olyroos were in camp not too long ago at the Australian Institute of Sport.

But for the stylish Musitano there is still plenty of time, even for addition to the Olyroo squad. Australia could well utilise his speed, skill and aggression and it might just be a matter of time before he gets the phone call that his devastating play deserves.

Top of the mountain; but there's a long way to go

THERE ARE a lot of differences to the NSL this year.

One is its new title, and sponsor, while another is the swashbuckling style of football that many of its sides are playing.

But maybe the biggest surprise is that one of those sides is UTS Olympic who are not only doing well but are sitting on top of the mountain.

If a coach is the first to go when things go wrong then he should also be the first to stand up and take the credit, so, stand up Dave Ratcliffe.

Ratcliffe is the sort of coach who gets the very best out of his players.

He breathes a kind of honesty which is refreshing even in the semi professional Australian national league.

You might think that a 4-0 away win against

his former club Wollongong would send him into raptures - but you'd be wrong.

Instead he was looking for all of the things wrong in his side at the end of that game.

"I wasn't happy with the way we played," he said afterwards.

"We missed an awful lot of chances.

"We really didn't push ourselves as much as we could have done."

Nevertheless, that 4-0 win was enough to keep Olympic in pole position, something which is totally new to the club's legion of followers.

And the reason for that is the new found attacking flair that the team has found under Ratcliffe, himself a former player.

Many would be surprised that Olympic are playing attacking football, after all their coach is English and

had a reputation as a no-nonsense defender in his own playing days.

Put that together and you might have a reason for a middle of the table side, maybe just sneaking into the Top Six.

And on past performances the board of Olympic would have been delighted with that.

Instead you have the most lethal strike force in the country and a team which is the equal of any when it comes to flair and style.

The combination of Taliadoros, Trajanovski and Tome is without doubt the country's best.

But do the players see it that way?

"Undoubtedly," adds Taliadoros.

"We play an exciting brand of football which is certainly effective.

"We don't see anyone as being better than

ourselves."

Taliadoros has been part of that revival, snared from Marconi after a season which he would probably like to forget.

Also add the classy Milan Blagojevic to that 'thank God I'm playing' list and there are a few players to thank Ratcliffe for his faith in them.

Blagojevic has had an outstanding season so far after an horrific injury saw a promising season with Heidelberg United cut short last term.

But another reason for Olympic's success is their outstanding fitness.

"We score a lot goals late on in the game because we just wear teams down," says Ratcliffe.

"We keep on passing so much that we wear the opposition down and the opportunities probably eventuate

Globe Trotting *It isn't always what it is cracked up to be*

FOR EVERY Aussie player that makes it overseas there are at least another dozen who don't. They include the young and hopeful, kids straight from school, AIS graduates who have been dazzled by tales of the big time or just hard working NSL players who think that with an even break that they might just do it.

One of those is Sydney United's striker, Robbie Markovac who has returned this season after a spell of globe trotting which would have most of us spell bound. After a 188 game NSL spell which saw him at Melbourne Knights, Sunshine, Preston and Brisbane Markovac packed his boots and headed for the professional leagues of Europe. He spent one season in Croatia with Hadjuk Split, obviously a high point in his career, but then found himself in what he calls "no mans land" - wandering around Europe looking for a club.

His globe-trotting then took the striker to Ireland and Belgium where he ended up playing third division football. Not surprisingly he

decided to pack his bags and head back to Australia.

"Obviously I didn't head overseas to play in third division in Belgium, and I was feeling a bit homesick, so I decided to come back home," he said. Markovac was persuaded to sign on at Sydney United by coach Branko Culina.

"I'd worked with him at North Geelong," he says, "and I just liked the way that the club was set up and the way it is heading. Sydney United looks like a club which is going to win something so I was pleased to come here."

When asked to compare the different standards that he saw Robbie isn't one to quickly jump in and make rash statements. "It is very difficult," he says of that assessment, "but Australian football is a lot faster than Croatian where it is more technical. Maybe Croatian football isn't as aggressive as our game but the quality is there."

"Hadjuk Split is a big club with a lot of quality players. But I think that the Australian game is a good standard, particularly this season with the reduction to a twelve team league. Branko Culina is also a hard task master and he really wants you to play at your best every week and I am trying to do that for the club."

Position changes have seen United's big signing struggle a little but he has the quality which allows Culina to add depth to his squad, and that is something that has maybe been missing in recent seasons. It might just also be the depth which takes United to the league title this season.

Mike Komadina



towards the end of a game.

"Our fitness is good - there is no doubt about that.

"Fitness isn't a problem with this side which is basically a very young one."

So, a fit, young and committed side playing with all the panache that a three pronged strike force can muster - is that the recipe for ultimate success in this defence orientated game?

"The players that we have got at UTS Olympic can only play in that role," says Ratcliffe.

"Kimon, Traji and Normy - they all have to play in the side because they all deserve their place.

"We are certainly the highest scorers in the league so I don't really want to see any great changes.

"Maybe we look a bit open at the back at times but we back ourselves to score more than the average side."

And just for good measure Olympic went out and bought Brisbane Strikers top scorer of the last few seasons, Chris Slater, in a reputed \$12,000 transfer.

That might seem to be a glutton's feast but Ratcliffe doesn't see it that way.

"Chris's value is that he can play anywhere," he puts in.

"He can play wide at fullback where Scott Baillie has been playing or he can play up front, or in midfield.

"I felt that Joe Bacak (who was transferred to Melbourne Knights) was an out and out striker and the other lads have proven that they are better than him. "But we still haven't

got a great depth in our squad and with a couple of players sitting on possible suspensions we have to make sure that we have the necessary depth to get us through to the end of the season.

"So the players we are still looking to sign are also coming into our plans for the future, not just for the present.

"We also have three players still to come back from operations so obviously that will add more depth to our squad.

But is it too early to talk about championships at the city club?

"I would think so," finishes Dave Ratcliffe.

"We are just past the halfway stage.

"Olympic has to just keep playing well and getting the results."

"That's it."

Making way for the golden boy

When Sydney United signed Jimmy Patikas it looked like the end of the line for David Zdrilic - but the utility player didn't see it that way; and time has proven him right

"AS LONG AS WE are winning games I don't care where I play." That is the attitude of David Zdrilic, the Sydney United striker who was shifted into the back line to make way for big name import Jimmy Patikas.

But it was a move that has paid instant dividends as Patikas, the former golden boy of Greek soccer, ripped Canberra Cosmos to shreds in his first match back at the Croatian Sports Centre since returning from Europe.

United didn't just beat Canberra, they gave them a spanking they will remember for a long time.

For his part Zdrilic had an excellent match as fullback, backing defence up with some classy attacking moves.

And since then Patikas has continued his classy displays while Zdrilic has excelled in the fullback position, coming forward at will to add an extra dimension to the United machine.

"Our problem in the past has been scoring goals," says the former St George youngster, "and I would rather be playing as a fullback in a winning team than a striker in a losing side."

"As I said, I don't care who scores as long as Sydney United wins.

"Jimmy Patikas just has so much experience and class.

"He always wants the ball and we can just keep on playing to his feet and that is what we did against Canberra and we just killed them."

Some people might have the image of Jimmy Patikas as the huge mega star, aloof and unapproachable - but that is just so far from the truth as dressing room interviews show.

David Zdrilic also knocks that thought right on the head.

"Jimmy just helps everybody all the time, even on the training park," says Zdrilic.

"He's blended in straight away and all of the players like him."

And a final word on the switch in roles for David Zdrilic; "I know that I can score goals up front," he says, "but it is always dodgy as a striker, there is always a lot of pressure on you."

"At the back I can give a more consistent performance on a week to week basis - and like I say it doesn't matter who scores, as long as Sydney United win."



"And over the last month or so I have had more chances from right back than I have had as a striker."

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Time to head down the hill



RARELY, if ever, does a player switch over from the opposition to a massive reception from his new club's fans.

And when that team is near-neighbours and fierce rivals Sydney United then there is a lot of suspicion from the Stallion fan club.

This season Robbie Stanton decided it was a good time that he headed down the hill to Marconi and brought with him his defensive partner Eric Hristodoulou for good measure.

Maybe Robbie didn't become an instant pin-up boy at the Brescia scoreboard end but he has gradually won his way into the fans' affections with a string of good, and honest, performances.

But much of that has to do with the system that Marconi play, a system which seems to perfectly fit Stanton's game.

"We do switch around a bit at the back," he says, "especially if one of our markers doesn't have anybody to pick up."

"Then he can go in a diagonal and one of us will cover for him."

"We've also been getting down the left side a bit and it would be handy if we could rotate that more with the right because if the other sides know what we are doing then we could be in trouble."

But despite a good season so far the attacking defender hasn't let any complacency creep into his makeup, something which could be very dangerous with such a large squad at Bossley Park.

"You can't afford to," Stanton admits.

"At this club you could have a great game one week but if you play badly the next then you will be out."

"That definitely keeps you on your toes which is a lot of the reason why we are sitting so high in the league just now."

Last season Stanton was one of the best players at Sydney United and already he has shown signs that he will top that with his new club this time around.

The team spirit at Marconi plays a big part in that, with mateship very evident.

"That's right," he agrees. "We have gelled as a team and because we are all trying to play as a team we will cover for each other when things don't quite work out."

"We've picked up a lot more in the midfield and that has really helped us too."

"Dominic Longo has also been a huge boost."

"You wouldn't believe just how much he gets through in a game and the way that he keeps on breaking down the opposition attacks allows us to get going forward."

"There isn't anybody here who will get carried away by our results but now that we have seen who we are up against we don't fear anyone."

"We don't go out to draw, we go to win - and we are confident that we have the players to do it."

"I haven't seen anyone yet to make us afraid."

Cerro; looking for time on the ball

SURPRISINGLY Gus Cerro is still only twenty seven.

Surprisingly, that is, because he's had more than enough clubs.

But he seems to have found his niche in the game at last; and then some.

Just now he is on a 'busman's holiday' playing for Canberra in the NSL, where it all started out for him some years ago.

Then it was Canberra Arrows with whom he made his big league debut before going on to a string of clubs: Sydney United, Inter Monaro, Parramatta Eagles, Marconi, West Adelaide and now Canberra Cosmos where he is on loan from his Malaysian club Pahang.

"I love the kind of football that they play in Malaysia," says Cerro who is now adding a bit of skill to the Cosmos midfield.

"You have a bit more time on the ball than you do in the Australian game which just seems to be getting faster."

"It seems to be getting more and more

British."

Maybe some would be surprised that Cerro chose to come to Canberra, a team which is not renowned for its fancy footwork,

especially considering the wealth available to him as a full time pro in the M League.

But Cerro, doesn't quite see it that way.

"No I don't think that is fair," he says.

"You can only play to the ability of your team and the Cosmos side plays accordingly."

"The lads can play a bit and we have been playing more and more through the midfield."

The signing of Cerro, plus the arrival of John Koch as sweeper and the resulting switch of Paul Wade into midfield, has seen the Cosmos go on a bit of a spree, taking some highly fancied scalps along the way.

Despite that interim success the midfielder doesn't see anyway that he will cut short his M League career.

"No, I don't think so," he adds.

"I like the lifestyle in Malaysia as well as the football."



"But one of the few people to really show any faith in me in Australia was Raul Blanco."

"My career really started off with him at Parramatta, and that's why I wanted to rejoin

him after my disappointments at Marconi."

"I don't think that Berti Mariani ever gave me a chance there."

"I could play a great game but then the next week I would be out of

the side."

"I think it all depended on what your name was."

"I'm enjoying myself with Canberra and I'm keeping fit - but Malaysia is where it is for me."



Canberra Cosmos: their run of wins has silenced a lot of their knockers including a hard-to-please local press

The main ingredient for success

IN 1990 Kris Trajanovski and George Sorras of UTS Olympic were at the Australian Institute of Sport and as part of their total development they were assisting at a coaching school run by the then ACT Director of Coaching, Peter Hugg.

Little did they know then, and in this case can't even remember now!, that they were coaching two skinny little 11-year-olds who they were eventually to play against in the 1995/96 Ericsson Cup season.

These two players followed the ASF development pathway and played for their State junior sides and then graduated to the Australian Institute of Sport and have now become part of the great group of players that the Canberra Deakin club has produced.

The players are, of course, Josip Simunic of the Melbourne Knights and Ivan Zelic of UTS Olympic.

Peter Hugg recalls the players: "We used to give the players soccer homework which included watching the game on TV and researching soccer books and whilst the lads were not too keen on normal schoolwork they excelled at this type of work."

"They could also play a bit at this age and were exceptional talents."

The group also included a third talented player from the Deakin club, Zjelko Suzar, who also followed the same football career path and was about to embark on his Ericsson Cup career when a freak accident at training has put him out of the game for nine months - but there is no doubt that he will return to the top level.

Simunic is a player who was taken over to Ajax of Amsterdam by his manager, Tom Sermanni, and indeed impressed Louis van

Gall, coach at Ajax, greatly and he is keeping tabs on his progress.

Sermanni said: "Simunic is an exceptional talent who floats past players like they are not there."

"Once he toughens up and applies this great skill to the reality of elite football then he has the talent to be world class."

"I have no doubt that Ian Dobson will bring the best out of the lad."

Having seen Simunic in action at youth level it is amazing to watch often two and three players trying to get the ball off what appears such a gangling awkward player.

They don't succeed very often though.

The other player, Ivan Zelic, has had a severe baptism of fire for UTS Olympic.

His debut was in the abandoned game

against Daewoo Royals of Korea when he was elbowed in the head "off the ball" in the first minute and then followed three consecutive games in front of more than 10,000 people - against South Melbourne, Sydney United and Marconi.

In these games all he had to do as a 17-year-old was to mark Paul Trimboli, Francis Awaritefe and sweep at the Croatian Sports Centre - always a difficult place to play if you are of Croatian heritage playing for the opposition.

He handled all these games in style and UTS Olympic coach Dave Ratcliffe, who is not prone to media hype, has heavily praised the skill and attitude of the young player - though he constantly reminds him that he must finish his Year 12 and must improve his heading.

The reality of football is that for the next few years, until he establishes himself and his own identity, Ivan will be called 'Ned's

brother.'

Whilst he is many ways physically similar to Ned, he is also his own person.

He realises though that he has to accept this comparison and says that there is nothing that he can do about it except play as well as he can.

He would also like the comparison to his brother's wage packet!

Having coached and seen both players in action through their teenage development I can say that at the same age Ivan is a better player and athlete than Ned was.

Ned kicked on and made rapid development, both physically and football wise, when he was 19/20 at Sydney Olympic.

However, if you look at the records Ned Zelic wasn't a star of the 1989 World Youth team, - he was overshadowed by Horvat and Longo.

Ivan states: "I've learnt a lot from my brother's experiences and I want to establish myself in Australia in the Ericsson Cup before I try abroad."

"I want to play, if selected, in the 1997 World Youth Cup as playing for your country is an honour money can't buy."

"Olympic are a great

club and have looked after me very well."

"I really enjoy the training and all of the lads have helped me settle in quickly."

"Even Nick Meredith is not a bit like I thought he would be."

"It helps having ex-AIS players George Valas and Con Paradisis in the squad and obviously Olympic base their team on ability, not age, as Rafe Bove is also in the squad."

"The club looks like it has a great future and I want to be part of it."

Zelic is still commuting to Sydney from Canberra as Jim Kelaiditis, the Olympic president, insisted that his schooling must be completed, but he can't wait to move to Sydney to join the ever expanding number of Olympic players who train in the morning.

If he follows his brother it is in his own hands. His attitude is right, the club is behind him and his parents keep his feet on the ground. The main ingredient for all players, Suzar, Simunic and Zelic, is there.

They all love the game and perhaps the work of Trajanovski and Sorras back in 1990 helped fuel that love of the game.

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HEADS HIGH: a young Ivan Zelic outjumps Francis Awaritefe



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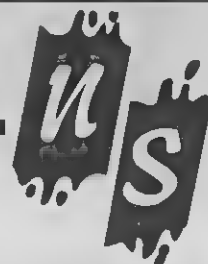
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Marconi Magic

by
Annisia Tann-Darby

KAYE YARDIN has more than one thing in common with her more famous Marconi-Fairfield clubmate, Jean Paul de Marigny. Not only do they play for the same club but they both are originally from the island nation of Mauritius – and have both represented Australia.

Both players are also excellent soccer ambassadors, Jean Paul de Marigny is currently Marconi club captain while Kaye Yardin is one of the longest serving members of the Marconi women's team.

Yardin began her football career playing in her local area for Granville RSL. However, she has come a long way in thirteen years since first representing the local side.

In that time she has become a solid member of the NSW state team in which she has played for the last six years. At this year's National Titles she once again emulated her feat of the previous year and scored the winning goal to gave the Blues the national title.

In 1996 the championships move to Darwin – and Kaye Yardin hopes to make it a hat-trick of winning goals.

Yardin is also an important part of her club side and last year the Marconi women's team won every competition that they played in; the Premiership by a staggering nineteen points, the Grand Final and the Waratah Cup.

Having initially being selected at Australian junior level in 1988 she has since gone on to represent Australia at various levels, including the youth team from 1989 to 1991 and as captain of the Australian Universities team in 1993.

Kaye Yardin is also a Schools Development Officer for the NSWSEF, like Jean Paul de Marigny, and each day the Marconi duo travel extensively throughout NSW teaching young children the fundamentals of the game.

They have both developed a reputation as outstanding coaches and you might think that the similarities between the Marconi Mauritius Magic finishes there, but you'd be wrong – and, just to top it all off – they are both left footed and both play either in the sweeper position or on the left side of the park.



Marconi on tour in Italy

MANY people believe that Milan, in Italy, is the heart of soccer and the Marconi Women's team have just played against the Milan Women's Serie A team, Monza.

In what was a great game in front of 3,000 people Marconi narrowly lost 1-2.

The Monza side included three Italian internationals and two Youth internationals and although they

by Annisa Tann-Darby, Australia's most capped female Soccerroo and player coach of Marconi

deserved their victory it was a great experience for our two youngest players, Taryn Rockall and Wendy Graham.

Jane Hornsby scored for Marconi with Female Soccerroo Traci Bartlett being the Marconi Woman of the Match.

The Italian women were very skilful with an excellent first touch

and we had to keep in the game through our physical condition.

The Marconi team have kept in training over summer for this tour and the coaching philosophy of 'if you are not quick you will never get to show your skill' was prevalent here.

A pleasing note for Australian women's

soccer was that the playing conditions for the elite Milan female team were not as good as the conditions at Club Marconi – and the pitch was very muddy.

A temperature of one degree celsius also made some of our players realise why players in Europe wear gloves.

The day after the game we were taken on a guided tour of the San Siro and having already been there for an AC Milan match I wasn't surprised to watch the players faces when they kept looking up at the terraces which appear to reach the sky.

After a shopping trip to some of the best soccer shops in the world (including Milan's own shop, 'Milan Point', ran by Baresi) a number of the players are now wearing the coloured boots as worn by George Weah.

Let's hope they have

some of Weah's talent in them!

Next stop is Florence to play against AFC Anglianna who have Australian Soccerroo Angela Iannotta in their side.

This will be a great test as they are the Italian champions and we will find out just how good we are in this game.

Iannotta has been a great help to us on this tour arranging a trip to Fiorentina's training session and tickets to a Serie A game when Lazio play in the Olympic Stadium in Roma.

The whole of Italy lives and breathes soccer and the television coverage of the game is endless.

For women it is great as the presenters are often female.

Italian men seem to understand that women can appreciate and love the game.

Next issue I will give a complete round up of the tour and feature some of Italy's star players.

Waltzing Matildas

THE INK was barely dry on the invitations to *Inside Soccer's* big opening bash at Rydges Hotel in Bankstown when the editorial phone started running hot.

One of the major subjects from female soccer players was their very obvious disgust at the name Matildas which was handed to them in a TV phone poll last year.

"It is degrading," says one prominent female Soccerroo who doesn't want her name dragged into the issue – just her opinion.

OK, well we won't say whether we agree or disagree with the media inspired name – but John White is ready to open up his mail bag for all your correspondence on the subject.

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Venue: Suncorp Stadium MATCH RATING: 8

Att: 10,081 Referee: E Brazzale

AUSTRALIA: Kalac 6, Ivanovic 5, Hooker 6, Lozanovski 7 (Muscat 5), Tobin 6, Popovic 8, Wade 5 (Polak 5), Blagojevic 7, Mori 7, Arnold 7, Spiteri 7. COACH: Eddie Thomson

ERICSSON CUP

ROUND 21

Friday 23 February

Wollongong City 4 (Perinich 53, 74, Jermen 70, Ceccoli 34) Newcastle Breakers 1 (Lowe 37)

Venue: Brandon Park MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 2,984 Referee: C Diomis

WW: Hughes 6, Bourke 6, Horsley 7, Naumovski 6 (Gjakovski 84th 2), Perinich 7, Lloyd 6, Jermen 7 (Laybutt 76th 3), O'Shea 6, Pollari 6, Ceccoli 6, Vrkic 6 (Bonetig 83rd 3). COACH: Nick Theodorakopoulos

NB: Carter 6, Hickman 5, Maier 4, Lowe 6, Halpin 6, Moore 5, Bennett 5 (Sprod 72nd 3), Thomas 5 (Zane 67th 1), Pryce 5 (Sanderson 76th 4), Stewart 6, Ritchie 5. COACH: John Kosmina

Yellow Cards: WW - Bourke, Naumovski, Vrkic. NB - Hickman, Zane.

Red Cards: NB - Zane

Saturday 24 February

Canberra Cosmos 3 (Castro 72, Perinovic 89, o.g.) Melbourne Knights 3 (Cervinski 63, Kutlesovski 22, T Pondeljak 30)

Venue: Bruce Stadium MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 2,669 Referee: D Crawford

CO: Mautone 2, Dee 7, Dunn 7, Kelly 6, Perinovic 6, T Popovich 4 (Lamezina 40th 4), Castro 7, Koch 6, Musitano 6, Dukic 2, N Popovich 4 (Dukic 63rd 2), Mazis 4. COACH: Mike Lyons

MK: Juric 6, Buljubasic 5, D Cervinski 6, Marth 6, Simunic 6, Lapsansky 7, Vojtek 5 (Z Markovski 63rd 5), Kovacevic 7, J Markovski 1 (Kutlesovski 7th 7), Nastevski 6, Pondeljak 7. COACH: Ian Dobson

Yellow Cards: CO - Musitano, Mazis, Dunn. MK - Pondeljak

Marconi-Fairfield 3 (Maloney 36, Awaritefe 46, Renaud 85) Sydney United 1 (S Babic 43)

Venue: Marconi Stadium MATCH RATING: 9

Att: 6,867 Referee: S Micallef

MF: Catlin 8, Stanton 7, Casserly 5, Harper 8, Hristodoulou 6 (McDonald 76th 5), Maloney 6 (Renaud 69th 5), Smith 8, Holst 6, Awaritefe 8, Souris 6, Zoric 8. COACH: Manfred Schaefer

SU: Crews 5, Kupresak 8, M Babic 8, Genc 6, Milicic 7, Rudan 5 (Enes 52nd 6), Patikas 5 (Trajkovski 52nd 4), Zdrilic 6, S Babic 6 (Lamond 58th 5), Bilokapic 6, Plesa 6. COACH: Branko Culina

Yellow Cards: MF - Casserly, Harper, Smith, Awaritefe.

SU - Kupresak, Genc, Bilokapic.

Red Cards: MF - Casserly. SU - Genc

Sunday 25 February

UTS Olympic 3 (Trajanovski 44, 50, o.g. 69) West Adelaide 2 (J Tsekinis 18, 29)

Venue: Leichhardt MATCH RATING: 8

Att: 8,268 Referee: G Connolly

SO: Bouhoutsos 7, Zelic 6, Barrett 7, Ciantar 6, Poimer 6 (Augerinos 65th 5), Tsekenis, Taliadoros 7, Tome 6 (Valas 85th 2), Trajanovski 8, Ardone 5, Meredith 7 (Bove 79th 3). COACH: Dave Ratcliffe

WA: Blazincic 7, Alagich 4 (Thorpe 45th 5), Kokkinopitis 5, Slager 3, Tibaldi 6, Iriarte 6, Aloisi 6, Milosevic 4 (Cardozo 27th 6), Karamidas 6, Tsekenis 7, Andrioli 6 (Morrison 51st 4). COACH: Raul Blanco

Yellow Cards: SO - Ardone, WA - Kokkinopitis, Milosevic, Cardozo

South Melbourne 0 Brisbane Strikers 0

Venue: Bob Jane Stadium MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 5,341 Referee: B Hugo

SM: M Petkovic 6, Blatsis 6, Kuzmanovic 6, Coveny 7, Sherifovski 7, Damianos 6, Petersen 6 (Nikolic 73rd 4), Knezevic 5, Baser 5 (Anthopoulos 77th 4), Alsopp 5 (Curcija 46th 5), Orlic 6. COACH: Frank Arok

BS: Bolton 6, Zoricich 6, Williams 5, Hunter 6, Phillips 6, Brown 5, T Cranney 6, Ditton 5, Brayshaw 5, Hews 5 (Wehman 80th 2), Tollenaere 6. COACH: Bruce Stowell

Yellow Cards: SM - Orlic, BS - Ditton.

ROUND 20

Friday 16 February

Newcastle Breakers 5 (Thomas, Halpin 3, o.g.) Canberra Cosmos 5 (Wade 2, Musitano, Kelly, Dunn)

Venue: Breakers Stadium MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 2,817 Referee: M Shields

NB: - Carter 3, Hickman 3, Maier 3, Lowe 4, Halpin 7, Moore 4, Bennett 4, Thomas 5, Pryce 3, Stewart 5, Ritchie

4. COACH: John Kosmina

CO: Mautone 3, Dee 5, Dunn 4, Wade 5, Kelly 5, Perinovic 4, T Popovich 3, Castro 5, Koch 3, Musitano 4, Mazis 4.

COACH: Mike Lyons

Yellow Cards: NB - Ritchie. CO - Dee, Dunn

Saturday 17 February

Brisbane Strikers 1 (o.g.) Wollongong City 1 (Lloyd)

Venue: Suncorp Stadium MATCH RATING: 7

Att: 5,432 Referee: E Brazzale

BS: Bolton 6, Zoricich 6, Williams 5, Hunter 6, Phillips 6, Farina 6, Polak 7, Brown 6, T Cranney 6, Ditton 6 (Hews 81st 3), Brayshaw 5. COACH: Bruce Stowell

WW: Hughes 6, Petratos 6 (Lloyd 72nd 5), Bourke 5 (Bonetig 55th 5), Horsley 6, Naumovski 6, Perinich 6,

Forshaw 4, Jermen 5, O'Shea 5, Pollari 5, Ceccoli 5.

COACH: Nick Theodorakopoulos

Yellow Cards: WW - Naumovski, O'Shea, Ceccoli

Marconi-Fairfield 1 (Bingley) UTS Olympic 3 (Poimer, Trajanovski 2)

Venue: Marconi Stadium MATCH RATING: 8

Att: 11,866 Referee: B Hugo

MF: Catlin 5, de Marigny 5, Bingley 6, Harper 6 (Casserty 45th 6), Hristodoulou 6 (Zoric 45th 5), Maloney 6, Smith 6 (Stanton 61st 4), Awaritefe 7, Souris 6, Renaud 6, Longo 7. COACH: Manfred Schaefer

SU: Bouhoutsos 6, Barrett 7, Ciantar 6, Poimer 7

(Augerinos 58th 6), Tsekenis 6, Taliadoros 6 (Edwards 69th 5), Tome 7 (Bove 76th 5), Trajanovski 8, Meredith 6,

Blagojevic 6, Zelic 5. COACH: Branko Culina

Yellow Cards: MF - de Marigny. SU - Poimer, Edwards

Morwell Falcons 0 Sydney United 0

Venue: Falcons Park MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 2,693 Referee: G Connolly

MO: Kouris 6, Marcina 6, Canosa 6, Tapal 7, Savin 7,

Waddell 5, Bothwell 7, Talladira 6, Villani 5, Reda 6

(Stergiopoulos 80th 3), Douglas 5. COACH: Harry

Bingham

SU: Crews 6, Trajkovski 5 (Gibson 67th 5), Kupresak 7,

Popovic 7, M Babic 7, Genc 6, Milicic 6, Rudan 6, Zdrilic 6,

S Babic 6, Lamond 6 (Aschner 80th 3). COACH: Branko

Culina

Melbourne Knights 0 Adelaide City 1 (Hassell)

Venue: Croatian Sports Centre MATCH RATING: 6

Att: 4,130 Referee: E Lennie

MK: Juric 7, Buljubasic 6 (B Bacak 85th 2), de Amicis 5, Cervinski 5, Z Markovski 6, Simunic 6, Lapsansky 6

(Nastevski 73rd 4), Vojtek, Kovacevic 5, J Markovski 5, J

Bacak 3 (Pondeljak 25th 6). COACH: Ian Dobson

AC: Petkovic 6, Yates 6, Ivanovic 6, Tobin 6, Mori 7, Hassell 8, Gibson 7, Lozanovski 8, Armour 6, Mennillo 6,

Foster 6. COACH: John Peirin

Yellow Cards: MK - Juric, J Markovski. AC - Lozanovski,

ERICSSON CUP

THE TOP MARKSMEN

(as at 25 February)

- 17 Kris TRAJANOVSKI (UTS Olympic)
- 16 Damien MORI (Adelaide City)
- 12 Frank FARINA (Brisbane Strikers)
- 11 Paul WADE (Canberra Cosmos)
- Francis AWARITEFE (Marconi-Fairfield)
- 9 Jim TSEKINIS (West Adelaide)
- 8 Andy HARPER (Marconi-Fairfield)
- 7 Rod BROWN (Brisbane Strikers)
- 7 Ivan KELIC (South Melbourne)
- 7 Tony PERINICH (Wollongong Wolves)
- 7 Paul TRIMBOLI (South Melbourne)
- 6 Pablo CARDOZO (West Adelaide)
- 6 Bradley HASSELL (Adelaide City)
- 6 Warren SPINK (Morwell Falcons)
- 6 Kimon TALIADOROS (UTS Olympic)
- 5 Brad MALONEY (Marconi-Fairfield)
- 5 Ante MILICIC (Sydney United)
- 5 Michael MUSITANO (Canberra Cosmos)
- 5 Mike SMITH (Marconi-Fairfield)
- 5 Norman TOME (UTS Olympic)
- 4 Lachlan ARMSTRONG (Canberra Cosmos)
- 4 Shaun BABIC (Sydney United)
- 4 Jason BENNETT (Newcastle Breakers)
- 4 Matthew BINGLEY (Marconi-Fairfield)
- 4 Brian BOTHWELL (Morwell Falcons)
- 4 Vaughan COVENY (South Melbourne)
- 4 Andrew MARTIN (Melbourne Knights)
- 4 Cyrille NDONGO-KELLER (West Adelaide)
- 4 Marko PERINOVIC (Canberra Cosmos)
- 4 Tom PONDELJAK (Melbourne Knights)
- 4 Tony POPOVIC (Sydney United)

Amour

West Adelaide 0 South Melbourne 2 (Sherifovski, Curcija)

Venue: Hindmarsh Stadium MATCH RATING: 7

Att: 5,505 Referee: S Micallef

WA: Blazincic 6, Alagich 6, Kokkinopitis 6, Slager 5 (Iriarte 45th 4), Hooker 7, Tibaldi 6, Aloisi 5, Milosevic 6, Ndongo-Keller 5, Tsekenis 6, Day 7. COACH: Raul Blanco

SM: M Petkovic 8, Blatsis 6, Kuzmanovic 6, Panopoulos 5, Trimboli 6, Sherifovski 5 (Damianos 85th 3), Knezevic 6,

Baser 6 (Curcija 87th 4), Alsopp 6, Muscat 7, Orlic 5

(Anthopoulos 71st 4). COACH: Frank Arok

Yellow Cards: WA - Day. SM - Panopoulos, Sherifovski, Baser, Orlic

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE

NORTHERN DIVISION

Les Scheinflug Cup

ROUND 20

Wollongong City 1 Newcastle Breakers 1

NSW ITC 10 Blacktown City 2

ACT Academy 0 AIS 4

Parramatta Eagles 1 Queensland Academy 5

Marconi 0 Sydney United 2

ROUND 19

Wollongong City 4 St George 0

NSW ITC 2 Newcastle Breakers 4

ACT Academy 2 Queensland Academy 1

Blacktown City 1 AIS 6

Sydney United 0 UTS Olympic 2

RE-SCHEDULED MATCHES

AIS 3 Queensland Academy 1

Sydney United 0 Parramatta Eagles 2

NSL COLTS LEAGUE

Graham Arnold Cup

ROUND 13

Bonnyrigg 3 Parramatta Eagles 2

Sydney United 0 Sutherland 3

Adamstown Rosebuds 1 Leichhardt Tigers 2

Central Coast 1 Illawarra Lions 3

MacArthur 2 UTS Olympic 0

Bankstown City 1 Warringah Dolphins 1

Rockdale City 3 Canterbury 1

ROUND 12

Bonnyrigg 3 Sutherland 1

Canterbury 0 Sydney United 7

Parramatta Eagles 1 Bankstown City 1

Central Coast 3 Leichhardt Tigers 0

Warringah Dolphins 0 MacArthur Rams 2

Rockdale 1 Illawarra 5

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

ROUND 3

Adamstown Rosebud 2 (Robertson, McGuire) Canterbury 2

St George 0 Illawarra Lions 0

Bonnyrigg Eagles 0 Parramatta Eagles 2 (Haythornwaite, Reveley)

Sutherland Sharks 1 (Bard) Central Coast 1 (Clark)

Bankstown City 1 (Josevski) MacArthur Rams 0

Leichhardt Tigers 2 (Zec, Telisman) Blacktown City 1

(Anderson)

Warringah Dolphins 4 (Lowe, Bledham 2, Harding)

Rockdale City

ROUND 2

St George 1 (Karavatakis) Warringah Dolphins 1 (Guzzo)

Central Coast 3 (Clark, D Brown, og) Rockdale City 3 ((E Williams 2, McDonald)

Blacktown City 1 (A Versi) Sutherland 1 (Bard)

Adamstown Rosebud 4 (Hudson, Budden, Gilday, og)

Illawarra Lions 2 (Sterjovski, Guido)

Bonnyrigg Eagles 3 (Soper, Hoenselaars, Agius)

Canterbury 1 (og)

Leichhardt Tigers 2 (Xuereb, Telisman) MacArthur Rams 0

Bankstown City 1 (Petrovski) Parramatta Eagles 0

ROUND 1

Adamstown Rosebuds 2 (McGuire, Bock) St George 0

Bonnyrigg Eagles 5 (Hoenselaars 3, Flynn, Ninkovic)

Illawarra Lions 2 (Guido, Preston)

Sutherland Sharks 1 (Porter) MacArthur Rams 0

Bankstown City 5 (Petrovski 2, Josevski, Boskovski, van Bentum) Canterbury 1 (Manolopoulos)

Leichhardt Tigers 0 Parramatta Eagles 4 (Machado, Meilak 3)

Rockdale City 1 (Zoric) Blacktown City 4 (Connolly 2, Berry, Bradley)

Warringah Dolphins 1 (Lowe) Central Coast 0

The Prince of Strik

Once upon a time he was the darling of the terraces, the striker the opposing fans loved to hate.

He is Noddy Alston, the first Aussie to break into the big time overseas, but since then he has almost become the forgotten man of Australian football.

HOW CAN you rank in the top ten of all time Australian international appearances and also the top ten of Soccerroo goal scorers - yet still be disregarded when it comes to writing a book on the best fifty players?

Adrian Alston wasn't just a good player, he was a star at a time when Australian soccer was genuinely brimful of stars.

Remember that during the 1960s and early 70s ALL of the best Soccerroos played at home, we had no genuine big name expat

by Inside Soccer Editor Bruce Campbell

players then.

Alston was also the man to change that trend when he went to Luton Town from Safeway United in 1974 for a then record Australian transfer figure of \$20,000.

But journalist Laurie Schwab has somehow managed to miss his name out when he recently charted a list of the 50 best Australian players.

But then that is maybe

no surprise because the man who should be one of the biggest names in Aussie soccer is instead an almost forgotten hero, just a name in the history pages as the game in this county rolls on into another era.

"Tell me who Schwab had as number one," said 1974 World Cup coach Rale Rasic when I asked him about the best fifty, "was it Ray Baartz?"

And when I shook my head and told him that it was Alan Davidson, certainly one of THE best of all time, Rasic just add in that laconic manner which is his hallmark: "Number two, Noddy is my number two - Baartz was the best."

OK, so we disagree, and I have to admit that I didn't see Baartz play as much as Alston but then I was also a victim of the Alston Charisma.

I had the good fortune to travel on St George team busses when he had everyone singing football songs.

I also saw him on TV regularly when he played in England.

So maybe I am biased when I put him at the top.

Ray Baartz would definitely be in my Top Ten as would Alan Davidson, one of the classiest defenders we have ever had - but Adrian Alston, the man they called Noddy, not in the first fifty

LIKE a lot of Aussie players, in the 1960s



Alston was an immigrant, coming out from England in 1968 to play for South Coast United in the old NSW First Division.

He had been at Preston where his brother Alex had been a first team regular and a bit of a star but Adrian never really made it so, like a lot of others, he came to Australia.

"I'll always remember arriving here," says Alston.

"It was the middle of summer here but it was FREEZING in England

and the day I arrived it was over the century.

"Trevor Birch picked me up at Sydney airport in this huge limousine and on the way down to Wollongong we stopped off at Bulli Pass.

"I looked out at the fabulous scenery and beaches and thought 'this is it, this is where I want to live'.

"We stopped off for something to eat and I got asked if I wanted a prawn cocktail - but I didn't drink and told them that!

"Then at Wollongong I was stunned when they told me that I was playing that same day and to get my boots.

"By half time I was

throwing up all over the dressing room as thought that I was having a nightmare but the other players didn't think so because they were all chanting my name!"

But Alston's arrival wasn't exactly headline news in the Sydney press.

Soccer World, the doyen of all soccer publications, reported him as John Alfston.

His first Federation game wasn't auspicious either, a 2-0 Ampol Cup defeat.

South Coast did win a single game in its pre-season Ampol Cup that year so it did come as any surprise when St George beat them 1-0 in the first game of the league season.

Noddy's form couldn't have been too hot either, for *Soccer World* rated him a 2.

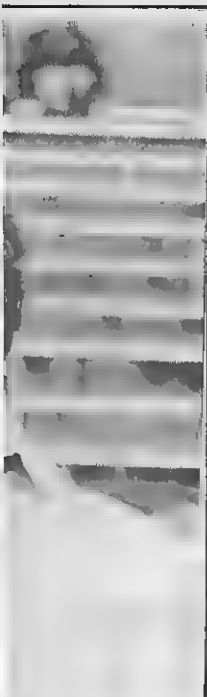
But the next week he got his first hat-trick South Coast United 7-2 demolition Canterbury and from then on his name was seldom out of the papers.

Always the controversial type of player that you either loved or hated, Alston was



Luton Town manager Harry Haslam walks the Kenilworth Road turf with Alston after the Soccerroo legend had signed for the English First Division side in 1974

ers



European opponent) Alston went on to win 39 caps for his country.

There is no doubt that he could have taken that tally much higher had he not gone overseas at the height of his career.

But the World Cup in Munich in 1974 propelled him onto a bigger stage and saw him play for Luton Town, Cardiff City and the star-studded Tampa Bay Rowdies.

In the time he was away Australia played well in excess of thirty internationals and who knows what his final honours would have been.

Before the '74 World Cup put Australia on the soccer map the Socceroos were often forced to play against club sides yet in an amazing period from 1970 until 1974 Alston only missed two full internationals.

If he had played in today's era he would have certainly been higher on the leader board.

But by the time he made his last appearance in the green and gold there was a young star by the name of John Kosmina on the way up.

Alston played a part season as a guest with the fledgling NSL Canberra City in 1977 when his former team mate Johnny Warren was coach.

That allowed him to play another four games for Australia before he bowed out against Iran, Australia's old nemesis, in front of 90,000 hysterical fans.

Sadly, Australia lost 1-0 that day and so ended another World Cup campaign - and closed the chapter on one of the greatest ever Socceroo stories.

Cruciate ligament damage eventually finished his professional soccer career before he later turned to coaching.

But two hard seasons with a cash strapped Wollongong NSL side eventually saw his head on the sacrificial altar.

You could be forgiven for thinking that today Alston is a bitter figure whiling his time away with only fading memories to look back on.

But nothing is further from the truth.

Is he upset that he isn't involved with the game at a higher level?

"I'm really happy coaching Port Kembla," he says.

"Last year we won everything in Illawarra

and it looks like we'll do it again this season too.

"My wife Doreen and I love Wollongong but sometimes I think that the stars of the game get forgotten too easily.

"Surely there is a place somewhere for us?"

Lately Adrian Alston has been gaining celebrity status as a function speaker although at a recent promotional dinner in Wollongong he caused a sensation by slamming the ASF for allowing the naming rights for the Australian national team to be degraded.

But his forthright honesty is another Alston hallmark, this time of the man rather than the football player.

"Honestly," he says, "we were the FIRST Socceroos - but how can you be the Coca-Cola Socceroos?"

"Isn't that ridiculous.

"We played for Australia, not a can of drink - and were proud of it."

But there is light on the horizon and I suspect that Adrian Alston has yet to write another few chapters in his amazing book.

He has recently signed up with *Inside Soccer* as a celebrity columnist and there are many in the game who feel that the exposure will propel him up to the level he deserves.

"I am glad that he is coming back to the big time, he is the greatest," finishes Rale Rasic, "I love him.

"We have always turned our backs on our stars, but Adrian Alston is fabulous.

"He MUST be involved in the game more."



elated by *Soccer World* in its end of the year summary when "Dennis Alston" was described as an "average player who failed to live up to his big reputation."

Nevertheless, he finished that season as the league's top scorer.

In 1970 the-then glamour club St George brought him to Hurstville where he was the final cog in an exciting strike force which included Ollie Abonyi, Alan Ainslie and the prolific scoring Mike Denton.

Johnny Warren added that touch of class in the midfield to a team which still rates as one of the best eevens that Australian soccer has ever seen.

"I always rated Noddy even above Johnny Warren and Ollie Abonyi," says Rale Rasic who became St George coach in 1971.

"Warren was a fantastic player but Alston was a brilliant header of the ball and such a great striker."

Called up for his first full international in 1969 against Greece (Australia's first ever victory over a

Fact File

Adrian ALSTON
Born 8.2.48, England.
Position: Striker

Australian Cape
South Coast United
1969: GF, FH, FH(s)
St George
1970: IR(s), IS, GF, M
1971: IS, IS, IS
1972: IN, NZ(s), SV, SK(s), SK, PH
Sydney United
1973: BUL, BUL(s), NZ, IQ, IN, NZ, IQ, IN, IR, IR, SK, SK(s), SK(s)
1974: U(s), IN, IS, EG, WG, CH
Canberra City (on loan from Tampa Bay Rowdies USA)
1977: K, SK(s), SI, IR
Total Appearances: 39
Goals Scored: 8

Other Clubs Played For
Luton Town
Cardiff City

Current Club
Port Kembla (Illawarra) - coach

NEXT ISSUE

The Socceroos Dream Team



Mike Smith skips past Milan Blagojevic in the recent Marconi-UTS Olympic derby

ERICSSON CUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UTS Olympic	21	13	5	3	42	23	44
Marconi-Fairfield	21	13	4	4	41	23	43
Brisbane Strikers	21	11	4	6	35	22	37
Sydney United	21	8	8	5	26	20	32
West Adelaide	21	9	4	8	30	28	31
Melbourne Knights	20	8	6	6	21	16	30
Adelaide City	20	8	4	8	33	27	28
South Melbourne	21	8	3	10	31	35	27
Morwell Falcons	20	7	4	9	23	35	25
Canberra Cosmos	21	5	7	9	36	39	22
Wollongong City	21	4	2	15	19	45	14
Newcastle Breakers	20	2	5	13	21	45	11

* 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw

NORTHERN YOUTH LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marconi-Fairfield	20	15	1	4	64	16	46
AIS	21	14	2	5	67	28	44
Sydney United	20	13	0	7	40	25	39
ACT Academy	21	12	2	7	40	39	38
Wollongong City	21	11	3	7	46	40	36
Qld Academy	19	9	1	9	50	33	28
UTS Olympic	19	8	4	7	40	28	28
Parramatta Eagles	21	7	6	8	36	36	27
Newcastle Breakers	21	7	3	11	34	43	24
Blacktown City	20	5	4	11	32	68	19
NSW ITC	20	3	0	17	21	72	9
St George	17	2	2	13	14	58	8

* 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw

GRAHAM ARNOLD CUP

	P	W	SD	D	L	F	A	Pts
MacArthur	12	8	2	0	2	23	12	28
Central Coast	13	6	4	0	3	31	25	26
Illawarra	11	7	2	0	2	25	12	25
Olympic	13	8	0	1	4	17	7	25
Bonnyrigg	13	6	2	0	5	20	21	22
Warringah	13	5	3	0	5	21	16	21
Parramatta	11	5	3	0	3	16	18	21
Bankstown	13	5	2	1	5	26	19	20
Sydney United	13	4	4	0	5	19	17	20
Rockdale City	13	6	1	0	6	21	23	20
Leichhardt Tigers	13	5	1	0	7	15	26	17
Sutherland	12	4	1	0	7	20	22	14
Canterbury	13	4	0	0	9	13	29	12
Adamstown	13	1	1	0	11	14	34	5

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

	P	W	SD	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bankstown City	3	3	0	0	0	7	1	9
Warringah	3	2	0	1	0	6	1	7
Adamstown	3	2	0	1	0	8	4	7
Parramatta	3	2	0	0	1	6	1	6
Bonnyrigg	3	2	0	0	1	8	5	6
Leichhardt Tigers	3	2	0	0	1	4	5	6
Sutherland	3	1	0	2	0	3	2	5
Blacktown	3	1	0	1	1	6	4	4
Central Coast	3	0	0	2	1	4	5	2
St George	3	0	0	2	1	1	3	2
Illawarra	3	0	0	1	2	4	9	1
Canterbury	3	0	0	1	2	4	10	1
Rockdale City	3	0	0	1	2	4	11	1
MacArthur	3	0	0	0	3	0	4	0

3 points for a win, 2 for a score draw, 1 for a no score draw

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melbourne Warriors	6	6	0	0	23	3	18
Sunshine	6	6	0	0	13	2	18
Altona	6	5	0	1	11	6	15
Bentleigh	6	4	0	2	9	5	12
Thomastown	6	3	2	1	8	8	11
North Geelong	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Bulleen Lions	6	2	2	2	8	7	8
Green Gully	6	1	3	2	9	11	6
Springvale City	6	2	0	4	10	15	6
St Albans	6	1	1	4	6	9	4
Box Hill Inter	6	1	1	4	5	12	4
Port Melbourne	6	0	3	3	7	14	3
Fawkner	6	0	2	4	6	12	2
Albion	6	0	1	5	1	13	1

Statistics compiled by George Johnstone

LEADING SUPER LEAGUE SCORERS (as at 25 February)

1	Mark HOENSELAARS (Bonnyrigg)
3	Saso PETROVSKI (Bankstown)
2	Grant BARD (Sutherland)
2	Mark BELDHAM (Warringah)
2	Andrew CLARK (Central Coast)
2	Anthony GUIDO (Illawarra)
2	Nick JOSEVSKI (Bankstown)
2	Liam MCGUIRE (Adamstown)
2	Sacha TELISMAN (Leichhardt)
2	Eric WILLIAMS (Rockdale)
1	Pat AGIUS (Bonnyrigg)
1	Jay ANDERSON (Blacktown City)
1	Stewart van BENTUM (Bankstown)
1	David BOCK (Adamstown)
1	Saso BOSKOVSKI (Bankstown)
1	Damien BROWN (Central Coast)
1	Peter BUDDEN (Adamstown)
1	Jason FLYNN (Bonnyrigg)
1	David GUZZO (Warringah)
1	Allen GILDAY (Adamstown)
1	Dean HARDING (Warringah)
1	Tom HAYTHORNWAITE (Parramatta)
1	Cameron HUDSON (Adamstown)
1	Steve KARAVATAKIS (St George)
1	Matt LOWE (Warringah Dolphins)
1	Grant McDONALD (Rockdale)
1	Richard MACHADO (Parramatta Eagles)
1	John MANOLOPOULOS (Canterbury)
1	Malcolm MEILAK (Parramatta Eagles)

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

ROUND 6

Box Hill Inter 1 (Guscio) St Albans 0
Fawkner Blues 1 (Vasiladis) Melbourne Warriors 3 (Vlahos, Karapatsos 2)
Altona Magic 2 (Rusmir 2) Springvale City Vales 1 (Lettieri)
Bulleen Lions 2 (White, Giaccherini) Albion Red Sox 0
Sunshine Georgies 2 (Cassar 2) Port Melbourne Sharks 1 (Chalmers)
Green Gully Cavaliers 1 (Azzopardi) Bentleigh 3 (Micheil, Todorovski, Charalamboous)
Thomastown Zebras 1 (Zinni) North Geelong Warriors 0

ROUND 5

Springvale City 0 Bulleen Lions 1 (White)
Bentleigh Greens 4 (Todorovski 2, Alagiozidis, Micheil)
Box Hill Inter 1 (Petrakos)
St Albans 1 (Uslebrka) Thomastown Zebras 2 (Zinni, Gnjdic)
Port Melbourne Sharks 2 (Bell, Dunic) Green Gully Cavaliers 2 (Scobie, Crodden)
North Geelong Warriors 2 (Fitzpatrick 2) Fawkner Blues 1 (Ujgunovski)
Albion Red Sox 0 Sunshine Georgies 3 (Cassar, Nilo, Field)
Melbourne warriors 4 (Vlahos, Despotovski 2, Tzolakis)
Altona Magic 0

Gray's Soccer Blue vision

NSWSF boss Peter Gray isn't content to sit back on his achievements; instead he has clear plans about the future of the game in this state, a future which embraces the growth of professionalism

by Bruce Campbell

THE actual size of the NSW Super League has been an issue for debate for the last couple of years. NSWSF president Peter Gray (pictured below) has his own definite ideas on that as well. "I believe that it should be twelve," he

says, "but some will say that it should be reduced to ten. "Our First Division competition is strong at the moment but that is a the next stage which I want to see built up. "I also believe that the Rugby League has built up an excellent model for a country competition.

"We are going into the third year of our semi professional competition in the Orange-Bathurst zone. "We also hope to start another zone shortly in the Riverina area and within the next three or four years we hope to have a full time coach and full time administrator set up in each

one."

Another innovation this season, after a lot of huff and puff, will see the State of Origin soccer series finally get under way.

"The ASF have said that it will take place after this year's Ericsson Cup," says NSWSF president Peter Gray.

"Players will be bound to States where they first started playing the game.

"But if a state doesn't want a player then the others will be able to come in.

"However, once a player has played for a state then he will be 'cup tied'."

That is good news for the players and, depending on the final format of the competition - and it actually getting off the ground - finally offers players something like full time employment.

"I think it gives players an extra career option," agrees Gray.

"The more games which are played means the more money that players can earn, so hopefully there will be four or five attractive state teams.

"What I think should happen in the game is that the ASF should come in and contract the top players and the states have got to do the same thing to."

Gray also has thoughts on the possibility of the SoccerBlues bringing in star players to supplement the locally available players for his team.

"I also believe that the ASF should make all the NSL clubs bring in an overseas player next season," he says, "whether it is an Australian player or a foreign player.

"It will only add to the quality of the league."

Details of the State of

Origin series are yet to be finalised

But Gray's vision for New South Wales extends far beyond the immediate boundaries of the State.

Although he has put plans in motion to cement soccer's position in country zone regions he still harbours his dream of having the SoccerBlues play overseas.

"That's right," he admits.

"I haven't given up my idea of having a professional state team play in the Korean K League.

"I have had very favourable reports from a meeting I had in Korea the last time I was there.

"The first year, if it did happen, would probably see us play in their pre-season and then the next year we would have a home and away basis competition.

"Many of the best players will always want to go overseas but I think it is realistic to keep the fringe ones here by offering full time football.

"That is what we have to aim for."

Gray has achieved a lot in his tenure as president but he clearly still has a lot of ambition left.

"You can never be happy," he admits, "it can always be better than what it is."

"But I think that we have kicked a few balls already."

Exciting times are obviously on the horizon for the premier soccer state as the game expands into a new era, one in which Peter Gray has a clear vision of the SoccerBlues leading developing their own identity in Asia - and the NSWSF confirming its position as soccer's leading state.

New Boys Mean Business

ONE OF THE surprise bids for next season's Ericsson Cup came from NSW State League side, Sydney Cosmos.

While many Super League clubs were grappling with the difficulties of stepping up a league the Cosmos have put in a confident bid which clearly outlines their future goals.

It is an amazing turnaround for the club which only played its first season last year when it finished second bottom of the First Division, although they were nineteen points clear of relegated Liverpool City.

This year they are the clear favourites to win the First Division and are looked upon as a Super League side of the near future.

The reason for the amazing turnaround? Simply put, stars.

And stars is what the Cosmos have in abundance for they have signed up a galaxy which would even challenge for the Super League title.

Add Socceroos Tommy McCulloch and Ian Gray, to junior internationals like Darren Iocca, loss in a bit of experience in the form of Peter



Gunning, Gerry Gomez, Tony Dakos, Grant Lee and Rudi Jerkovic and it is obvious that they mean business.

One player still to come in is Canberra Cosmos defender Paul Dee (pictured above).

The AIS graduate is full of confidence about the coming season.

"We should romp away with this league," he says.

The Sydney Cosmos are a very professional outfit.

Former Socceroo Joe Watson is coach and they also have a great back room staff including Charlie Jurusic who was physio to the Socceroos.

Dee is having an outstanding season with Canberra after being released by Marconi and has probably been their most consistent player.

But the one signal message that the new boys on the block exude is professionalism.

An advertising campaign was launched at the start of the season to announce that they meant business and they backed up that up with the production of a colour poster and player cards which would set the standard in the Ericsson Cup.

That is clearly Joe Watson's target - but in the meantime he has to take out this season's First Division.

The signs are that he will do just that and with something to spare.

A buzz at Bestic Street

SOMETIMES it seems that you can't do anything right.

After all, how can you drop from the heights of Australia's leading club, and major instigator in the start of the national league, to

State League.

Not Super League, mind you - but State League.

Dumped from the NSL in controversial circumstances, Stadium all but closed down, relegated from Super League - and nearly everyone in the country counting you down and out.

That was the fate of the once mighty St George, the high flying Saints who for two decades were THE pace-setters in Australian soccer.

But the word at Bestic Street is that they are back, there is a definite buzz around the place.

The Stadium has been cleaned up, the club has got its act together off the park and coach Peter Katholos is putting a good young side together on it.

Things are looking good, so good in fact that St George recently played host to two touring J League sides.

And with SBS Sports boss Les Murray in the presidential role the Saints are clearly intent on bringing back the glory days to the club.

"We haven't applied for the Ericsson Cup," says full-time administration officer Marcel Poeder.

"We have had a lot of hard work to do to get this club back on track and the national league

is a bit in the future yet.

"It costs us over \$200,000 just to run the club in the Super League and that is hard to find.

"But we've got a good committee who are all working hard and having Les Murray as president is also excellent.

"His profile in the game is tremendous and it really does help."

But Poeder is proud that St George are back on the right track and points to a five year plan which he says will see the club back in the top flight.

"When we were demoted to State League it set the club back an awful lot but last year's hard work has really put us back on the map."

That is evident by the continual enquiries

Poeder receives from J League and Korean club sides wanting to play the Saints.

But it's on the park that finally matters and coach Peter Katholos knows that the focus is now on him.

Nowadays the man that they call the 'Kat' is

content to sit in defence, guiding his young players through a game.

"We've got some good youngsters in the squad," he says.

"I'm fairly confident that we have got a good enough squad to do well in the Super League.

"Every now and then I want to go forward and have a dig at goal but I don't have the legs to play up front anymore!"

Last year Katholos turned everything

When St George were in trouble they turned to one of the best of modern day strikers to help them out. Now Peter Katholos, the man they call the Kat, is playing his role - from defence.

PICTURE: a thinking Peter Katholos



round at the club and took them into the Super League playoffs.

But this year it will be a lot harder because of the new split league system which has been introduced.

"It is harder for us this season," he admits.

"We have to finish top in either the first or second part of the season to make the Grand Final.

"That won't be easy but we will be competitive.

"Who knows, we've got a lot of good young players - we'll just have to wait and see what happens."

Already a couple of the younger Saints have started to shine giving Katholos reason to be hopeful of a good season.

"We have to develop our own youngsters," says Marcel Poeder.

"St George can't afford to go out and buy ready made stars anymore so we have to put the work into the kids.

"But the signs are there, we have good young players coming in who feel comfortable playing in the first grade side.

"They also have had the experience of a season in the National

Youth League and that has been good for them too."

Maybe the great days are in the past, days when the likes of Abonyi, Warren and Inside Soccer's Adrian Alston used to strike fear into the hearts of defences.

But there is a definite buzz in the air at Bestic Street.

There is still a lot of hard work to be done - but at least the dark days are in the past and if Marcel Poeder has his way that is where they will stay.

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The only man who has ever taken Australia to the World Cup Finals somehow keeps on missing out on the top jobs. Read what Rale Rasic says in *Inside Soccer*

They've shut me out



Rale Rasic goes back to developing youth as he plots a course for Rockdale glory

ROCKDALE coach Rale Rasic is used to being hard done to.

Over the year's he has filled more than one trophy cabinet with the

mementoes of his success; success which includes taking the Socceroos to their one and only World Cup finals, winning the

national championship, the national cup, the Tokyo international tournament and being recognised by his peers as NSL Coach of the

Year.

But this season he isn't basking in any of the high profile coaching jobs being jockeyed around, instead he is doing his time all over again in the NSW Super League.

"When I coached Australia I did it for \$2,000 the first two years," he says.

"Thankfully times have changed and Eddie Thomson is lucky that he is coaching in an era in which the Aussie coach gets well paid."

But Rasic doesn't have too much time to reflect on the ups and downs of his tempestuous thirty year love affair with Australian soccer.

Instead he is trying to bring Rockdale back to the top of the NSW Super League.

Last year the Suns finished in a disappointing ninth position but that doesn't deter him.

"This club has incredible potential," he says.

"We have a great population area of genuine soccer lovers and can call on a region which extends through St George, Sutherland and Rockdale.

"This is a big area and it is largely untapped.

"We have to promote our youngsters that is where the future lies."

Rockdale has also major resources behind its ambitious bid for the future including a \$2 million club house, a training complex as well as a main ground which includes the number one pitch and a training pitch.

And it has the kind of progressive manage-

ment that will take it to the top, with maybe the Ericsson Cup a not too unrealistic future goal.

It also has a number of very talented players and when you talk to Rasic about these he just exudes confidence.

"We have Grant McDonald who honestly doesn't know just how good he is," says Rasic.

"Then there is the 'old fox' Zlatko Markovski - I don't believe that a player of his ability hasn't made a name for himself in the NSL.

"We have experience in players like Keith Warren, Paul Fernandes and Stephane Jee who spent time with Blacktown, Southampton in England and Morwell Falcons.

"Stephane is a marvellous footballer who is something special.

"And we also have Ivo de Jesus who spent the summer at UTS Olympic.

"He has great talent but coaches don't like this type of player, he has just too much technique for most of them.

"He doesn't tackle or run through brick walls but he has the kind of skills that I love."

Rockdale presents Rale Rasic with the perfect opportunity to show-case his talents but he also has another love which might not hit the back pages but gives him tremendous satisfaction just the same.

"I love coaching kids," he says. "This year I will be coaching in Texas. I'll be there for six weeks in June and July coaching for the International Soccer Academy. You get so much satisfaction with children - that is our future."

And Rockdale, well they'll be in the safe hands of Doug Utjesenovic, former St George and Socceroo star.

Rale Rasic - looking to the future with Rockdale Suns

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Federation Cup bonanza in store says Smoothey

THIS year's Federation Cup is set to be one of the best in many years according to newly appointed ACTSF Marketing Consultant, Bob Smoothey.

"We have put in a number of exciting initiatives," he said, "and I am sure that there will be greater interest in the tournament as a result."

"We want to go back to the traditional knock out format and will accept an entry of only sixteen teams."

"Also, games will be played as double-headers which will allow us to have a bigger supporter base and at the same time reduce costs."

"For the first time we are also introducing prize money for the winner which is our way of trying to help out clubs in hard times."

The first round of the Federation Cup will be played on 31st March with the quarter finals played on Easter Monday, the semis on Wednesday 8th May and the Final at the AIS Athletics Stadium on Monday 10th June.

Other initiatives such as a quality Cup magazine and a special spectator's holiday prize draw will add to the interest but maybe the most interesting aspect from a spectator's viewpoint is the staging of games on holiday dates and mid-week.

"This is part of an overall concept to raise the public interest in ACT soccer," said Smoothey.

"The entry of the Cosmos into the Ericsson Cup has been great for the sport in the ACT and we intend to maximise that advantage."

"A number of potential sponsors have expressed their interest and I am sure that we are in for good times."

Smoothey's appointment is a welcome appointment and is a sign to Canberra clubs that the ACTSF is heading in the right direction after a period in the doldrums.

Last year the start of the Federation Cup was turned into a farce after a large number of clubs were expelled and then only re-admitted following a lengthy, and costly, legal battle.

"We have to put all that behind us," added Smoothey.

"The interest is there and I am sure that we can build on that."

Canberra Deakin, current holders of the Cup will likely be at long odds to make it a double.

They will start this ACTSF season without five of their best players from last year - Marko Perinovic, Stan Dukic, Tony Lemezina, Michael Musitano and Jason Dunn - who are all Cosmos regulars.

Additionally, Joe Gagetti has decided to drop down to State League after work commitments forced him to curtail his own Cosmos career.

Nine times winners Juventus are likely to start warm favourites but the first round, which is also the official start of the season, is likely to create a few surprises.

The draw for the Cup is to take place on Tuesday 19th March at a lavish function in the presence of ACT Government officials.

"We have to take the competition up market," said Smoothey, "and this is a clear indication of what we are trying to achieve."



Monaro coach Tony Brennan: gearing up for a return to the top flight

Forza Monaro

IN ONE of the biggest shake ups seen in ACT soccer in many, many years former NSL side Monaro are set to return to the new-look ten team Premier League.

But the team which also boasts a New South Wales championship to its haul of honours would be the first to admit that it find it tough this time around.

"We've made a big step up from State League. Second Division," says coach Tony Brennan, "and we

know it will be tough."

"I said from the outset that we needed at least five or six players with Premier League experience to be competitive and it looks as if we will have that."

In his NSL days with Canberra City and Brisbane Brennan was known for his electric pace down the wing but if he has slowed up a little it certainly hasn't diminished his passion for the game.

"There is a great buzz around the place once more," says the man

who once figured in Soccerroo squads.

"The ground is looking really good and it should be in top shape by the time of the Mayor's Cup on March 17."

"We'll be playing against Queanbeyan City and it is great to have two competitive teams in the top flight from the city."

"But we aren't thinking about New South Wales leagues or anything like that, instead we're looking for Monaro to provide

an outlet for the youth of Queanbeyan."

Brennan has added another two NSL stars to his coaching staff, former Soccerroo Harry Williams and Tilly Carbone.

"They'll be a big help," he says. "But like a lot of clubs we have also got a great committee hard at work. This year John Barillo is club president and everything is looking good."

But one obstacle to the Premier League sides is the ability of

rivals Canberra Deakin to pay the big bucks.

That could see the best of local talent pooled into one side and if the thirty or so players who are training with the Cosmos and Academy sides don't come back to local soccer then clubs like Monaro will really find it tough.

"Last year Deakin were paying \$200 a game to some players," says Brennan.

"We just can't match that."

"And despite what some people are saying I think quite a few of the local boys at the Cosmos will be back there again. Our budget for this season is \$30,000 - and that's without paying any players. But I think that a lot of players have been spoiled over the years. Sure, you have to look after the lads but some clubs have just gone a bit too far."

"They've set a precedent now in local soccer which is very hard to change."

But while the real glory days at Monaro's Riverside Stadium are still in the future there is an expectancy that they will do well in their first year back in the ACT Premier League.

That in itself will be enough for Tony Brennan.

No way Woden Federation rejects rescue plans

THIS season's ACT Premier League will kick off without the presence of Shamrock Rovers after an eleventh hour plea from the cash-stricken club was rejected by the Senior League Management Committee.

"The club wanted to be allowed to pay off their debt (which is believed to be in the region of \$27,000) at the rate of \$3,000 per month," said an SLMC member.

"But the committee rejected the proposal in light of the overwhelming feeling of the other member clubs at last December's AGM."

Despite Shamrock Rovers almost continual debts since entering the Premier League a few seasons ago the club, which was previously known as Southern Cross, had an excellent on-field record.

Shamrock Rovers also had plans to

change its name to Woden United in an attempt to capture more of the junior soccer market in that part of the city.

But that move would have brought it into direct conflict with Weston Creek.

Last season the club finished third in the Premier League and were at one widely regarded as the model for the future of ACT soccer.

But a succession of

off-field financial problems ultimately led to its downfall.

At the December ACTSF AGM there was unrest when the total indebtedness was revealed with some clubs calling for their immediate sacking.

This latest twist now spells the end for the one-time ambitious club which will now not even be allowed to field a team in State League.

Bryant battles the 'bag men' for success



Steve Bryant: former Birmingham City, Portsmouth and Canberra City star is looking for success on the coaching front

STEVE BRYANT'S return to Tuggeranong United this year is probably the result of the fact that the game is as much in his system as anything else.

"The game is my blood," he says, "I'm glad to be part of soccer again this season - and also there isn't much else going around."

It is no secret that the man who transformed Tuggeranong from a happy little family club into the giant of ACT football has a healthy loading of ambition, just as it is no secret that his ambitions over the last couple of seasons have been thwarted in the corridors of power.

"I don't know if a lot of people actually realise what happened when I was ACT State coach," he says.

"But basically I had two weeks to prepare

the ACT team for the Chief Minister's XI against Gamba Osaka.

"The players trained every day for two weeks and then on the day of the game I got a phone call to tell me that Manis Lamond and Ante Moric from Sydney United were to be picked.

"I said that I wouldn't pick them but got told that Barry Neame (the ACTSF CEO) was being told what to do by the Chief Minister.

"But the Chief Minister wouldn't know what shape a football is.

"I had to go up to Tony Lemezina, the best striker in this town, and tell him that he wasn't playing.

"That was the last I saw from Tony Lemezina, and you can't blame him.

"A lot of the earlier

ideas that the Federation had (such as touring overseas and playing in the Isle of Man tournament) were pie in the sky.

"They blew up the paper bags and they burst in their faces.

"I'm ambitious," adds Bryant, "I want to go up

people on the Cosmos board."

In the meantime Bryant has been totally ignored for any position in the Canberra Cosmos NSL set-up and also missed out on jobs with UTS Olympic and Wollongong Wolves.

strong family ties here I would have already gone," he admits frankly.

"I think you have to be a lot closer to the scene to get anything.

"But I'm not sitting back.

"I've applied for the job as New Zealand

"I had to go up to Tony Lemezina, the best striker in this town, and tell him that he wasn't playing".

the coaching ladder and I was very disappointed that I didn't get a position here with the Cosmos.

"I've obviously said boo to the wrong

He admits to a realisation that to get a better coaching job might mean a move to Sydney or even overseas.

"If I didn't have

national coach and I'm also writing to the Federations at Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands."

Another possibility, and one which Bryant

Having starred alongside Trevor Francis, Bryant came to the-then NSL Canberra City with a big reputation.

As a coach he has only added to that success - but still can't get a foot in the door of the big jobs.

doesn't totally discount, is the possibility that he will eventually be forced to go back to England, with Portsmouth already having made contact with him.

"If it wasn't for my family I wouldn't be here," he adds.

"Canberra hasn't done anything for me.

"It has taken a lot but hasn't really given anything back.

"There isn't anything at all here for ex NSL players.

"I was ACT coach for three years.

"I knew that there wasn't any money involved but I did it for the love of the game.

"And then I didn't even get told that I had been replaced.

"I didn't get a letter, a phone call or anything - and then they phone me now at 11.30pm and ask me to apply for the job

"I had been led to believe that I would be involved with the Cosmos, if not as coach that I would definitely be involved.

"I was told by one of the 'paper bag' men that if I didn't get the job (as Canberra Cosmos coach) that I would definitely be part of the set-up.

"As far as being part of the set-up now I get a phone call from Mike Lyons whenever he needs me to help him out.

"I think that Mike does like me there but to be honest having me there is just a convenience for him.

"I've done a lot of things in this town for nothing.

"I get peanuts from Tuggeranong, nothing from the ACT - and I've been fairly successful.

"But I don't think that you have to be successful to get on in this town."

That might mean that Bryant's immediate aim would be in Sydney, in the NSW Super League - and he takes a split second to confirm that possibility.

"Yes," he flashes.

But Bryant's obvious discontent with the raw deal that he has been handed shouldn't let anyone think that he won't put blood, sweat and tears into the ACT

Premier League again.

This season Bryant has the difficult task of matching it with financially more able clubs like Belconnen United and Canberra City.

"On the field we can match it with anyone," he says, "but off the field that is a different matter.

"This year the club are trying to improve that (financial) status.

"The junior club will be a separate identity this year in terms of finance this year.

"The juniors basically just wanted the seniors to do a coaching clinic during the holidays, something which is really just a baby sitting service - I don't think that we'll be doing that this year.

"To be honest I am disappointed with the way that the club has been run.

"We really solely on the fees that the players pay to get by.

"If we had business people running the club it would be a lot better.

"Really, with the amount of seniors and juniors that we have (well over the 1,200 number) we should have had a club house by now."

This season Bryant may well return to a youth policy if his stars at the Cosmos and the ACT Academy of Sport don't come back to the club.

One possibility he has definitely ruled out is using Cosmos players during the Premier League season.

"I don't think that that is fair," he says.

"We have had the chance to use AIS players in the past but I don't think that it is fair on Tuggeranong players who are all trying to come through.

"It's not fair to bring in players, who are technically better and fitter, for a few games and chuck out your own boys just to drag them back again when it suits."

It will definitely be a season of struggle for Tuggeranong United but with a man who is used to struggling at the helm - and still getting results - there is only one result in sight, to win.

Port Kembla gunning for success

CHAMPION Illawarra club Port Kembla are gunning again this year, with the Premiership clearly in their sights.

And judging by their knockout series results they could be in for another crackerjack season.

Three games to date have yielded eighteen goals, enough to warrant their early status as raging hot favourites for the League once again.

"We've got a good side once again and I

would hope to top it up with a few more players still to come in from the national soccer league," says coach Adrian Alston.

"I believe that the league is a far higher standard these days because of the influx of NSL players and with nearly every team having at least one player who has played at the top it only makes the games more attractive."

Port Kembla have now gone ten months

without being beaten and it is a record which they are jealously guarding.

That also includes a run of seven games, including last year's finals, without even conceding a goal.

"Remember, we played in the Grand Final without any of our NSL players," says Alston.

This season some of the exciting names at the club to watch out for include Paul Robaard, an exciting

midfielder who has Super League experience with Illawarra Lions.

Robaard fills an attacking role for the club and he will likely shine along with Matthew Borg who became frustrated with his lack of chances at Wollongong Wolves.

Alston still has hopes of getting Andy Ravello (pictured) and Paul Beltrame, who is on loan to the Wolves, back from Marconi for the winter season.

"Paul might be a bit of a problem just now because he has just had an ankle operation," adds Alston.

"I'd like to get Jon Angelelli and Jeremy Harris back as well."

"We've got basically a very young team where the average age is between 19 and 24."

Locals reckon that the Illawarra League is at its highest standard for many, many years and you certainly won't get any argument with the Port Kembla boss about that.

"At this club we have got the backing of a lot of very hard working people," adds Alston.



Loan Ruling Too Tough

CONTROVERSY is raging in Illawarra with the introduction of a new ruling which prevents ISA clubs from signing short term Ericsson Cup players on loan.

"Our club is furious," says one club spokesman. "We'll go along with the decision of the ISA - simply because we have no choice."

"In the past we could sign a couple of 'name' players but now they have to play all ISA games - and that means that they just won't come."

"Why should any of the top players miss out on the start of pre-season training in the Ericsson Cup?"

"Instead we'll be forced to use younger players who aren't first team regulars - and they won't draw anybody through the gate."

The ruling has come as a result of an exodus of NSL players during last season's play offs, with ISA officials keen to represent the local league in the best light possible.

"I reckon that the standard of the Premier League is very high and we draw excellent crowds."

"But I don't know if I'd stick my neck out as far as saying that it is as good as the NSW Super League."

"Port Kembla would do OK but we'd really have to be playing those

clubs regularly to make in charge, some three seasons now, the Ports have lost just six league games."

This season Port Kembla is again sponsored by the Fraternity Club.

That is something it is of their ambition for the future. For Alston's part he'd be happy if that figure was still six come September - with another treble on the club's sideboard.

Boots 'n' Balls

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ON
**MATCH OF
THE DAY**



Ivan Kelic: the former South Melbourne star will be playing in the colours of Tiong Bahru this season in the fully professional S League

S League set to boom in '96

by
Abdul Jalil

THE newly re-structured S League of Singapore has set itself ambitious targets of rivaling the other major Asian leagues like the K League (Korea), M League (Malaysia) and J League (Japan).

But if the standard of play is matched by the ambitious plans of CEO Douglas Moore and his executive then that just might be a reality.

Sweeping changes to the league include;

- * clubs staffed by full time professional

players

- * each club allowed a maximum of five foreign players with a mandatory minimum of three

- * salary caps for local players set at \$5,000 per month per player and visa players set at \$6,000 per month

- * each club encouraged to sign two national team players

- * a \$70,000 winners prize for the championship

- * the league split into two phases with the phase winners playing off in the Grand Final

- * grants of \$400,000

to each club in the eight team competition.

"We had to place restrictions which wouldn't cause problems in later years," said CEO Douglas Moore from his lavish office accommodation.

"The budget for each club in the 1996 league would be about \$800,000 per club with \$400,000 subsidy expected from the Singapore FA."

Last year Australian club Darwin Cubs dropped out of the league in August because of financial problems.

But even the Singapore Lions, the national side, faced

problems and towards the end of the competition when their crowds had dropped off to sometimes 200.

But Moore's new direction is sure to grab public attention, especially with the Lions players split throughout the league.

"We have had tremendous interest from overseas players," said a league spokesperson.

"But some of the players, particularly from Australia, are pricing themselves out of the market."

"We will allow exceptions to the salary cap but they really have to be justified by the clubs."

"Some well known players wanted to come here, like Tim Bredbury who has played in Australia and Hong Kong, but he wanted \$9,000 a month which is excessive."

"Scott Ollerenshaw was also targeted by Tampines Rovers but at \$10,000 per month he was too expensive."

The transfer deadline for the 1996 season closes on January 31 and new faces which are likely to be seen in the S League this season include Ivan Kelic (Tiong Bahru), Joe Caletta (Wellington) as well as 82 French cap, Manuel Amoros.



KIWI WYNTON RUFER is the latest of the big name European stars to head for the J League - although he is a hot tip to be playing for Perth Glory in Australia's Ericsson Cup sometime in the near future.

In the next issue of *Inside Soccer* we will bring you the start of our comprehensive J League coverage

China says no

Moves to upgrade the highly successful Chinese professional league to 14 teams in time for the start of this season's competition have been knocked back.

"We have a plan to increase by another two clubs for next season - and we are sticking to it," said a spokesman for the Chinese FA.

That means that the bottom two teams last season, Qingduo Hainiw and Liaoning, are relegated.

Bring in a local

FORMER All White World Cup star Duncan Cole has urged the need to bring in local coaches to avoid the recent fiasco when Bobby Clark left the Kiwi national team job in with the ball barely kicked.

"New Zealand doesn't have the kind of money to bring in the real top names from overseas," says Cole.

"So why don't we stick to the local men. There are coaches in New Zealand who could do a good job, if not an awful lot better than Clark."

Clark is rumoured to have left the All White's top spot because his wife didn't like life in New Zealand and wanted to go back to North America where Clark, a former Aberdeen and Scotland goalkeeper, had been coaching at college level.

It is another nail in New Zealand's international coffin and combined with the abysmal showing of their Olympic team recently in Adelaide does the Kiwis no favours.

"We have just gone back to a national league," continues Cole, "and I think that we can build the standard up if we start getting it right."

"I for one would definitely like to see the NZFA appoint a local coach."

"The re-start of a national league is just the right thing for our football just now and with the number of teams restricted the best players should be concentrated in those teams to ensure a good standard."

STOP PRESS: As *Inside Soccer* went to press the NZFA has advised that a new team has been appointed - look out for our sensational next issue when we will bring you an exclusive interview with the two man team.

The 1996 S League

Club	former name	'95 position
Geylang United	Geylang International	2nd*
Balestier Central FC	Balestier United	6th
Police FC	Police Sports Association	7th
Tiong Bahru United	Tiong Bahru	3rd
SAFFC (ARMY)	SAFSA	5th
Woodlands Wellington	Wellington	1st Div
Sembawang Rangers	Gibraltar Crescent	4th
Tampines Rovers	same	8th

* Geylang were second to the Singapore Lions (the national team) in last year's league but were awarded the championship as the Lions were ineligible for the Premier League title.



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He has piloted the careers of some of the biggest names in Australian football but now Ron Smith, former Head Coach at the Australian Institute of Sport, is ready to sample

ASIAN DELIGHTS



Another *Inside Soccer* EXCLUSIVE
 by Bruce Campbell

IT ISN'T exactly the football capital of Asia, nevermind the world, but when I caught up with Ron Smith shortly before he jetted out to Sabah he was as excited with his challenge as any new coach could be.

Over a ploughman's lunch at Canberra's George Harcourt Inn Smith talked quickly and excitedly about the challenge of being the Sabah State Director of Coaching, one which he already had a sneak preview of last season.

"They were in a bit of bother then," he recalls, "and were looking around for a new coach. Scotty Ollerenshaw gave them my number and in the end I went out there for three months."

"We qualified for the Malaysia Cup (the national league play off tournament) and it was maybe that which led to an offer of a two year contract."

"When I went there we were in ninth place in the league (the top ten teams qualify for the Malaysia Cup) with seven games left and I was basically told just to hang in there."

"We actually finished up in fifth place and then qualified for the semi finals for the first time in sixteen years only to miss a place in

the final on a penalty shoot out.

The Malaysian M League this year allows only two foreign visa places, as opposed to three last season, and at Sabah they will be taken up by their stars of last year, Australia's Scott Ollerenshaw and Bosnian Velimir Kovacevic.

"My understanding is that the Malaysian FA always had planned to reduce the number of visa players for this season," Smith adds.

"Naturally this gives the Malaysian players a bigger chance to play in the league but the objection to that was based on the amount of players suspended because of the bribery situation."

"This is just a part of a five or six year plan."

THIS YEAR the Sabah management also intends to pursue a more local policy and it is unlikely that they will sign any Malaysian players from outside of the state.

"Last year we had players from other Malaysian states," says Smith, "but the long term goal is to raise the level of football in Sabah."

"Part of my job is to keep up the profile of the national team and the other part is to sort out the infrastructure."

"We'll be organising our own state local league as well which will become a feeder for the national team playing in the M League."

"We have to establish a pathway which leads up from junior football and gives every player the opportunity to play at State level."

"But it also has to give an avenue for players to stay involved with the game who haven't quite made it or who have retired from the top level."

"That is where the State league comes in."

"Sabah has a good professional set-up with full time office staff as well as a soccer secretary, a goal keeping coach and a club doctor."

"The football council is an elected one and represents the various different factions within the State."

"But this year they are streamlining that to have a small committee which controls the national league side, and this should enable us to get very quick decisions with matters

relating purely to the team."

"The chairman is also the local Chief Minister of State, which is the Sabah highest ranking official."

SMITH left Canberra in a rare hot spell this summer with the steamy humidity of Sabah waiting him.

His first task is to sort out his squad for the M League and then get to work on the infrastructure of the game.

As State Director of Coaching his is an awesome task but it is one which he clearly relishes.

A mixture of field work with his boots on and then planning the game that he loves is clearly the ideal one for Smith. It is also the one that he has used at the AIS for the best part of a decade.

In that time Australia has risen to prominence in the junior world game with Smith's part in that rise being no small token.

Some might doubt Smith's wisdom in forsaking the security of the AIS for the turbulent, if decidedly richer, pastures of Asian football –

particularly in view of the fact that the Malaysians also want to install local M League coaches by the 1998 season.

"I don't think that will be the end of foreign coaches in Malaysia," adds Smith.

"All that they are saying is that they will review the employment of foreign coaches in the Malaysian League but they have been looking for coaches who can work with the national league teams as well as improving the standard of coaching within the state league structures."

"There could also be a role for technical directors, similar to that in the J League."

But clearly Smith isn't going to Sabah as a hole-plugging stop gap.

Instead they are planning a long term future for the man recognised as one of the finest youth and development coaches in the world.

That is a big accolade but it is one that Ron Smith fully deserves.

It may well be that the London-born Aussie comes back to haunt Australian football in the same way that Ken Worden did when his Malaysian national team scored a shock and historic win over the Socceroos.

Time will tell.

RON SMITH

ON the standard of Sabah football

"Malaysians aren't as big and strong a race as Australians so if they played in the Australian league they would be overpowered. For that reason I don't think that they would do well in the NSL."

ON Selangor

"They could adapt if they had time to get used to the NSL. They've had the three Aussies playing (Durakovic, Biskic and Mitchell) and they've got a track record. They've got some good quality players."

ON technique

"It is hard to make a comparison just now because we have lost six players to 'early retirement'. What they lack is understanding and tactical awareness. You can get some quick returns in that area but it does take time. The thing that has staggered me is the difference in number of games that youth players in Malaysia play compared to Australia. Australian boys can easily play 50 matches a year but in Malaysia the youth sides only play for two months. So that has to affect their tactical knowledge."

ON the administrative set-up

"It is hard to get a good overview in the short time that I have been there. But overall it seems to be pretty good."

ON the favourites for this season's M League

"There has been quite a bit of player movement from clubs within West Malaysia. But the clubs like Pahang and Selangor will always be there or thereabouts. Sabah might be viewed a bit like Coventry City. They haven't been up amongst the top but last season they won the FA Cup with probably the best Sabah team ever only to lose six players through suspensions."

ON the best player in Malaysia

"Kedah's Jan Javistik, a Czechoslovakian striker. He is a real handful. Darren Stewart is also one of the outstanding players. He had a great season. Alan Davidson has also done a great job in his own way, he has so much influence on his team."



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